

LS to take up triple talaq Bill on Dec 27, Kharge tells Speaker Cong will participate

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THE LOK Sabha will take up the triple talaq Bill for discussion on December 27. An understanding to this effect was reached on the floor of the House on Thursday after Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge told Speaker Sumitra Mahajan that his party wished to participate in a discussion on the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2018, and the legislation be taken up for consideration on December 27.

Protesting Congress members have disrupted proceedings since the Winter Session began to demand constitution of a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to look into the Rafale fighter jet deal. The party alleges irregularities in the deal, which the government has denied.

On Thursday, as the Speaker took up the Bill, listed in agenda, Kharge got up and stated, "Madam Speaker, I request you to take up this Bill on 27th.... We are all going to participate in that.... We are ready to discuss this.... This is a commitment to you in Parliament — we will stick to that."

Mahajan asked Kharge asked, "So you are agreeing that on the 27th you will do this (debate)?"

The Congress leader responded: "We will participate. We will give suggestions."

"No *hungama*, nothing? You will have a discussion," Mahajan asked.

Responding to this sudden development, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "Mr Kharge is a very senior leader. Today he made a promise openly before you. On 27th, we have no problem. The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs has conveyed that. But I would surely urge that this debate be taken up in a very sanguine and peaceful atmosphere. Kharge-sahab, I would like to hear you; I would like to hear all of you because this is an important issue — the entire country is watching, even the world is watching as far as the victims/ladies are concerned."

As Kharge affirmed that he "will stick to



Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad speaks in the Lok Sabha. PTI

that (assurance)", Mahajan said, "Yes, I am accepting it."

Kharge promptly pleaded with her, "You give sufficient time for discussion."

"I am giving," Mahajan said.

The Congress leader said, "We will put our point of view. They (government) will put their point of view. Ultimately, they have got the majority. They have got their own way. We have got our own say."

The Speaker thereafter called upon N K Premachandran of the RSP, who had sought to move a Statutory Resolution opposing the Bill. Kharge wanted this part to be also taken up on December 27. This tangle was untied by Premachandran, who said, "I fully support the observation of Kharge-ji.... I fully abide by his observations. Also, I fully support the observation of the Hon. Law Minister. This is a very historic and and important Bill. Let us move the Statutory Resolution on 27th."

The current Bill will supersede a previous Bill passed in Lok Sabha and held up in Rajya Sabha. Keeping in view opposition to the Bill from various parties, the government had cleared some amendments, including introduction of a provision of bail for husbands who issue instant triple talaq.

The government issued an ordinance in September pending the passage of the Bill in a revised form.