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# Gujarat assembly passes stricter bill on 'love jihad'

## Up To 10-Yr Jail For 'Unlawful' Conversion

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat assembly on Thursday passed a bill proposing amendments to the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003 paving way for more stringent punishment for forced religious conversions through marriage. The amendment bill provides for up to ten years of jail for 'fraudulent' or 'forced' conversion by marriage.

As per the government, the Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2021 sought to curtail "emerging trend in which women are lured to marriage for the purpose of religious conversion". The main opposition Cong-

## Congress MLA tears copy of bill

While protesting the amendments to the Freedom of Religion Act, 2003, Congress MLA from Jamalpur-Khadia, Imran Khedawala tore a copy of the bill on the concluding day of the Budget session in Gujarat state assembly on Thursday. "Home minister Pradeepsinh Jadeja has only mentioned that the daughters of the Hindu community are targeted by men from a specific community. Daughters, be it from any religious community, will always be our daughters. I too have over hundred testimonies of Muslim girls marrying into other religion," he said, adding that the bill is aimed at only one community. TNN

ress voted against the bill.

Many states like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha have enacted anti-conversion laws while states like Haryana and Karnataka are working towards bringing in a similar law.

The BJP government in Gujarat claimed that 'love jihad' or forced conversion had become a major law and order

issue. After amendments, the Act has sufficient provisions against any type of forced conversion or conversion through fraudulent ways, the BJP said.

Proposing the amendments, minister of state for home, Pradipsinh Jadeja, said, "The Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003 seeks to deal with religious conversion, through allurement, force or by misrepresentation or by any other fraudulent means. Hindu girls have been lured

by 'vidharml' boys using fake Hindu names and thereafter forcefully converted to other religions. Tablighi Jamat and other such organizations which want to destabilize Indian Hindu population fund such activities in an organized way," said Jadeja.

The minister said that not only girls but their parents and family members also face life threats and harassment. "Social organizations like RSS and VHP which try to save the girls and their families from harassment, face life threats too, so it has become a law and order problem and amendments to the law are required," Jadeja said.

The Congress vehemently opposed the Bill. The leader of opposition and senior Congress leader Paresh Dhanani said, "Why has the BJP desisted from using the words 'love jihad' in the proposed amendments?"