

## Women's reservation bill to be tabled in Rajya Sabha Tuesday

The cabinet Monday night decided to table the long-awaited Women's Reservation Bill that provides for 33 percent reservation for women in the parliament and state assemblies in the Rajya Sabha Tuesday, official sources said.

There was no official briefing after the Monday night cabinet meeting, but well-placed official sources said the bill would be tabled in the Upper House Tuesday.

There would not be any 'drastic changes in the old bill', the source said. 'By and large, the old draft will be presented. When it is tabled there will be a proper discussion to ascertain the views of other political parties,' the source added.

The cabinet meeting was held at Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's residence. Rashtriya Janata Dal chief and Railway Minister Lalu Prasad, who attended the meeting, agreed to the dominant view that the bill should be presented in the Rajya Sabha and then suggestions be made for amendments.

Lalu Prasad Monday did a u-turn on his 12-year-old opposition to the bill. 'Hum laagu karwaaenge (I will get it passed),' Lalu Prasad told NDTV TV news channel.

This comes as a surprise to many as Lalu Prasad's party has vociferously opposed the bill over the years, demanding that it should have 'quota within quota' for Other Backward Class (OBC) women.

The RJD chief, who said he would support the bill in its present form, said the quota-within-quota should be implemented sometime in the near future through an amendment in the women's reservation bill.

Earlier Monday, the Congress admitted that some political parties continued to have reservations over the legislation.

'It cannot be denied that people do have reservations on the issue. Once we have resolved these differences and reached a consensus, the government can present the women's reservation bill,' Congress spokesperson Manish Tiwari told reporters.

The bill was tabled in the Lok Sabha for the first time Sep 12, 1996 by the H.D. Deve Gowda government. Since then, it has been tabled in parliament several times but has been scuttled by political parties opposed to the idea. Other than the RJD, the parties that have opposed the bill in the past are Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and Samajwadi Party.

Sharad Yadav of the JD-U told reporters: 'We want a quota within the quota in the women's reservation bill to include those women who belong to OBCs.'

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