

## More women MPs in panel to fight for quota bill

Leading political parties Saturday added more members to a parliamentary panel that is discussing the controversial Women's Reservation Bill, which is facing opposition from some parties including a few ruling allies.

While the Congress party has nominated its whip Krishna Tirath and Tejaswini Gowda, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has proposed Kiran Maheswari and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) has suggested P. Satheedevi for the panel.

The parliamentary standing committee, headed by the ruling party's E.M.S. Natchiappan, had its first meeting earlier this week, which turned out to be a stormy affair.

The bill, which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in the budget session, seeks to provide 33 percent reservation for women in parliament and legislative assemblies. The bill was referred to the standing committee on Law and Justice.

Senior women leaders Jayanti Natarajan (Congress), former deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha Najma Heptullah (BJP) and Brinda Karat (CPI-M) have already been made members of the committee.

Devendra Prasad Yadav, leader of the Rashtriya Janata Dal, an ally of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA), had argued that the government should collect the responses over the bill right from panchayat level. However, women leaders supporting the legislation countered his demand saying that the bill had already been discussed in detail by a joint parliamentary committee.

The Samajwadi Party, whose MPs virtually tried to block Law Minister H.R. Bhardwaj from tabling the bill in the upper house, has replaced its MP Shafiqur Rahman Barg with high-profile leader Ram Gopal Yadav.

The panel is expected to submit its report on the bill in three months.

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