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## 'Love jihad' bill set to become an Act in UP as council too passes it

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Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill 2021, which is better known as the 'lovejihad' bill, was passed by a voice vote in the vidhan parishad amid protest by the opposition on Thursday, a day after the assembly gave its clearance to the controversial proposal. The bill will now become an Act once governor Anandiben Patel gives her assent.

The bill sought to replace the ordinance promulgated in November last year that made unlawful religious conversion a cognizable and non-bailable offence and provided for imprisonment up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 50,000 for violators.

The bill was tabled in the Upper House, where the government does not enjoy a majority, on Thursday. Leader of the opposition Ahmed Hasan and Congress's Deepak Singh demanded that the bill be sent to a select committee. Hasan said there are reports that police are

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misusing the ordinance.

"There are provisions in IPC to check religious conversion and new law is not needed. The government has brought the bill to cover up its failures of the last four years," Singh said.

Another SP MLC Shashank Yadav said a few sections of the bill were totally against the basic value of the Constitution. "The view of the government that religious conversion cannot be done by violating law is right, but for this, laws are already present," he said.

However, vidhan parishad chairman Kunwar Manvendra Singh rejected the demands of the opposition members. Amid ruckus by SP members, the chairman declared that the bill had been passed by a voice vote.

After this, SP members

trooped into the well and tore copies of the bill.

Under the provisions of the bill, a marriage will be declared "null and void" if the conversion is solely for that purpose, and those wishing to change their religion after marriage need to apply to the district magistrate 60 days in advance.

As per the bill, no person shall convert, either directly or indirectly, from one religion to another by use or practice of misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means or by marriage nor shall any person abet, convince or conspire such conversion.

The onus to prove that the conversion has not been done forcibly will lie on the person accused of the act and the convert, it said.