

## Disability Bill yet to see light of day in Rajya Sabha

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**New Delhi:** If one looks at the functioning of the Parliament, or the lack of it, in the last few days, it is no surprise that disability is not an important matter of discussion. In this winter session alone, the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Bill, 2016, has been listed for business four times at the Rajya Sabha. It is also no surprise that the Bill hasn't been taken up for discussion even once.

While in the last week, the Bill was listed twice, this week, it was up for discussion on Monday and Wednesday. The Bill has had a chequered past; it was first mooted in 2010 during the previous UPA government's term. The bill was drafted by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), an independent body of experts set up to draft the bill and monitor state policies on disability.

With a minority in the Rajya Sabha, the BJP is not going to gain any favours from the Opposition in the Bill's passage, says Indumathi Rao of the CBR Network. "They are wary of the NDA taking away the credit," she says.

While the Bill seeks to expand



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### NEW EXTENDED LIST OF DISABILITY

- Blindness
- Low-vision
- Leprosy cured persons
- Hearing impairment (deaf and hard of hearing)
- Locomotor disability
- Dwarfism
- Intellectual disability
- Mental illness
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Cerebral palsy
- Muscular dystrophy
- Chronic neurological conditions
- Specific learning disabilities
- Multiple sclerosis
- Speech and language disability
- Thalassemia
- Haemophilia
- Sickle
- Cell disease
- Multiple disabilities
- Acid attack victim
- Parkinson's disease.

the scope of disability from the existing seven to 21 conditions, it also takes away from the 2014 Bill the need to have a commission for the disabled. Vikas Sharma of the Disability Helpline India says that the Bill also takes away the provision of political reservation, which was assured by former PM Manmohan Singh, as per the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Sharma says that he submitted a memorandum to the PMO on November 28, and the standing committee before that.

"As per the 1995 Bill, the existing disability reservation quota is 3 per cent, and our demand was that it be raised to 6 per cent. The bill has, however, kept it at 4 per cent. Our demands were ignored and the bill was cleared by the Cabinet just two days later," he said.

There is an estimated 2.68 crore disabled persons in India, as per the 2011 census; this includes 1.5 crore men and 1.18 crore women.