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Disabilities Bill clears Rajya Sabha hurdle

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NEW DELHI: The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed a bill that stipulates stringent punishment for discriminating against differently-abled persons, the first in the winter session of Parliament that didn't transact any legislative business, after an incomplete debate on demonetisation on November 16.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014, proposes to increase the types of disabilities from 7 to 21 and added new categories such as acid attack victims, intellectual disability, autism, thalassemia, Parkinson's disease, hemophilia, speech and language disability and specific learning disability. It also proposes to increase reservation in educational insti-

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

Types of disabilities proposed to be increased from 7 to 21. The Centre will have the power to add more to the list



The news categories include: Acid attack victims, speech and language disability, specific learning disability, thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle cell disease

Every child with disability between the age group of six and 18 years will have right to free education. National fund to be created to provide financial support to persons with disabilities

PUNISHMENT: Imprisonment from six months to two years and fine ranging between ₹10K & ₹5 lakh for discriminating against persons with disabilities.

tutions and government jobs from 3 % to 4 % for those with benchmark disabilities.

The bill will now be sent to

the Lok Sabha. Once passed by the lower house, it will replace the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection

of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The new bill provides for jail term up to 2 years and fine up to ₹5 lakh for discrimination against differently-abled persons.

Participating in the debate, CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury said, "There are disabilities such as speech and language and intellectual capability as mentioned in the bill. Who is the authority to define it?" Social justice and empowerment minister Thaawar Chand Gehlot explained that a Medical Board would define disability.

Welcoming the decision, Javed Abidi, convener of the Disability Rights Group (DRG), said in a press statement that the new law would be a "game-changer and positively impact" the lives of crores of disabled people in India.