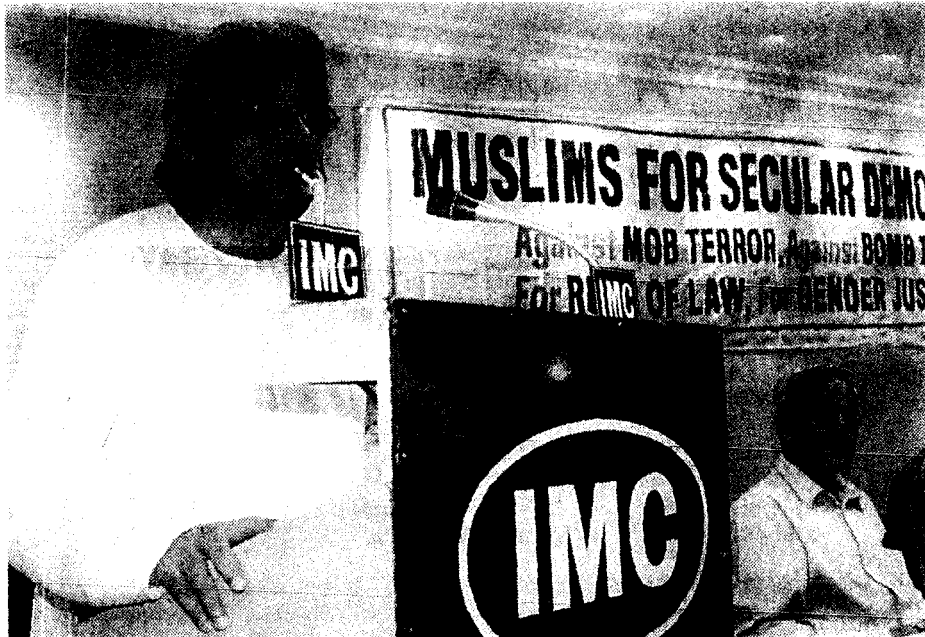


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Highlight positive images, says new Muslim body



Javed Akhtar speaks at a meeting of the Muslims for Secular Democracy— Ramesh Nair

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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TO PROVE you're secular, you have to form a Muslim organisation. Perhaps that's the paradoxical need of the hour," said lyricist Javed Akhtar.

Akhtar was speaking at the first meeting of the Muslims for Secular Democracy (MSD), a newly-formed national body at the Indian Merchants Chamber, Churchgate on Thursday.

Activist Javed Anand, columnist Hasan Kamal are some of the MSD's core team of nearly 25 people that includes journalists, businessmen and other intellectuals.

"Our aim is to challenge reactionary forces that

spread misinformation about the minority community," thundered Hasan Kamal condemning the role of "so-called *maulvis* and Imams".

The organisation also announced its declaration that criticises the hate propaganda and communal polarisation by the Sangh Parivar, among other teething issues.

The MSD committee plans to meet twice a month for discussions on religious intolerance, something that they believe needs redressal at the grassroots.

SMA Kazmi, an Allahabad advocate, attributed the insecurities of Muslims to the "constant demonisation" of the community. "Give a Muslim boy the

Resolutions adopted

- Stop communal violence
- Rule of law above all
- An open debate on the Uniform Civil Code

tabla and he's Zakir Husain, a pen and he's Javed Akhtar. Why aren't these positive images not highlighted?" Kazmi asked.

Diplomatically tackling a volley of queries, the panelists unanimously declared that "secularism and democracy are the first and last conditions for every Muslim's survival", when asked about the thought behind the name MSD.

Javed Anand added that combating Muslim communalism, too, is an urgent need of the hour.