

# New muslim body will counter extremism

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

AA 3/10/03

**Mumbai, Oct. 2:** Muslims for Secular Democracy, a new national body was formed on Thursday. The members of this newly born association include lyricist Javed Akhtar, lyricist and columnist Hasan Kamal, social activist Javed Anand, educationists, businessmen, doctors, lawyers, artistes, women activists from Maharashtra, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bhopal and Patna.

Javed Akhtar said, "At present, there is not a single Muslim organisation that takes a secular stand. MSD has been set up as a response to the sustained hate propaganda and the celebration of violence by the Sangh Parivar and its affiliates and also to the fanatics and extremists among Muslims who claim to be the sole representatives of the Muslim community." He added, "MSD represents a cross section of Muslim community for the first time in the

real sense of the term. We are going to speak loud and clear, displease Muslim extremists, embarrass and discomfort Hindu fundamentalists. It is high time we did so."

MSD has adopted a declaration that addresses several issues which have been foisted on the Muslim community by the Muslim and Hindu communal forces and which have been deliberately done to divert the attention of the people of the real issues facing them. The declaration is the result of several months of formal and informal deliberations across a cross section of Muslims in Maharashtra.

Hasan Kamal said, "MSD rejects violence as a solution to social conflicts and strongly condemns perpetrators of both mob and bomb terror. We believe that all the existing personal laws in the country, including the Hindu Code Bill are unfair to women and urgently need reform." MSD has demanded that the

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government should present a draft of the uniform civil code based on gender justice before the next assembly elections so that various communities can discuss and have a debate on the code. Mr Akhtar said that the representatives of MSD will form study groups and visit the interiors of the country, discuss the current topics, dispel the representations about the history and help them to change their perspectives. He said, "We are planning to set up a website and distribute pamphlets. Our aim is to make MSD into a national level mass organisation."