

Javed Akhtar blasts AIMPLB on *talak* issue

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AHEAD OF the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB)'s meeting scheduled for Sunday, Muslims for Secular Democracy (MSD), a progressive Muslim organisation, has begun clamouring for ending the "anti-Koran" and "anti-women" practice of triple '*talaaq*' (instant divorce).

Disturbed by the conflicting signals emerging from sections of the AIMPLB members on whether or not to end the '*talak*' practice, lyricist-script writer and MSD president Javed Akhtar on Friday warned the AIMPLB against "dragging its feet" on the contentious '*talaaq*' issue and said it was high time that the board put an end to the "inhuman" triple divorce practice.

"The AIMPLB has been sitting on the draft of a model *nikaahnama* for the last eight years. At its Sunday's meeting, we would like the board to adopt a resolution denouncing the instant di-

vorice practice and adopting the model *nikaahanama*," Mr Akhtar said.

Mr Akhtar, who made no bones about his resentment against the manner in which the AIMPLB had virtually been a party to the continued injustices against Muslim women, said that his organisation would have no alternative but to intensify its crusade against the instant divorce practice, if the board failed to accept the growing clamour for doing away with the triple '*talaaq*' practice.

Mr Akhtar, who addressed mediapersons along with MSD's vice-president Hasan Kamaal, organising secretary and senior Allahabad High Court advocate SMA Kazmi, said that the least one could expect was that the board would arrive at some consensus on the model *nikkahnama* proposed by Muslim women groups more than eight years ago.

He charged that AIMPLB had doggedly refused to initiate reforms in family laws in India long after the numerous Muslim-majority

countries had done so. "Even in a Muslim-dominated country like Pakistan, no woman can be divorced without the court's intervention," Mr Kaamal said, adding that silent majority among the Muslim community in the country was for annulling the triple '*talaaq*' practice.

Mr Akhtar and other MLD leaders condemned "fundamentalist", "retrogressive" and "reactionary" Muslim bodies, which had threatened to launch a nation-wide agitation should the AIMPLB pass an anti-triple *talaaq* resolution. He said the AIMPLB should not succumb to pressure from these bodies.

MSD's general secretary Javed Anand said that his organisation, which was founded on October 2, 2003, had been trying to mobilise Muslim opinion against the triple '*talaaq*' practice by holding public meetings in various parts of the country. "We have received extremely positive response from all sections of Muslims we have interacted with so far," he added.