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## Muslim Law Board's right questioned

By Our Special Correspondent

**MUMBAI, JULY 2.** On the eve of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) meeting in Kanpur, prominent Muslims under the banner of the Muslims for Secular Democracy (MSD), has challenged the Board's legitimacy and its right to speak on behalf of all Muslims. Well-known lyricist, Javed Akhtar, said today, with regard to the controversy over whether the Board will consider abolishing the provision of 'triple talaq' (instant divorce), that either the Board "should do the right thing or we have to see how they can be marginalised."

MSD, which Mr. Akhtar described as "a progressive movement against all the narrow-minded and archaic attitudes", has been campaigning for reform of the Muslim Personal Law.

Its demands include the acceptance of a model 'nikaahnama' (the marriage contract) drafted by Muslim women's groups over 10 years ago and changes in the laws relating to Muslim women's rights to inherit agricultural property.

S.M.A. Kazmi, organising secretary of the MSD and senior advocate from the Allahabad High Court, said that it was ironic that the Muslim clergy

had fought for an exception to the common law on maintenance in the Shah Bano case but had not raised its voice against the law on inheritance following the abolition of the Zamindari Act.

According to the Quran, Muslim women are entitled to a share in their father's property but the law that governs Indian Muslim women and all women denies daughters a share in their father's agricultural land. This anomaly had to be corrected, he said.

Both Mr. Akhtar and Mr. Kazmi emphasised that the AIMPLB does not have a statutory standing.