

## Rajasthan conversion Bill sent back

The State government has said that it reminded the Centre in June to clear the Bill, which defined “conversion” as “renouncing one’s own religion and adopting another” through “fraudulent means.”

The Rajasthan government is making attempts to get the President’s nod for the Bill that has been pending since 2008, the year it was passed.

The State government recently filed an affidavit in the court in response to a notice on a *habeas corpus* writ petition seeking production of 22-year-old Aarifa, who has converted from her religion and married a Muslim man. The court had asked whether there was any law or procedure in force in Rajasthan that governed conversions. The MHA examines Bills passed by the Assemblies that are repugnant to Central laws before they get the President’s assent to become a law. BJP president Amit Shah and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat have battled for “anti-conversion” laws at the national level, but the subject is on the State List of the Constitution and the Centre has no jurisdiction in the matter.

The Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya Vidheyak was passed by the Assembly in 2008 during the previous stint of Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. The Bill has provision for prison terms of up to five years. It also contains a clause for cancellation of registration of organisations held guilty of abetting conversions.

The Bill, which was sent for the President’s approval in 2006 too, was returned by Pratibha Patil.

END

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