

## **A national conference to uphold equal opportunity**

18 February 2009, Wednesday

DALIT STUDENTS' Solidarity Movement (DSSM) has organised a national conference on "SC/ST Reservation Bill 2008 and Academic Untouchability" in Andhra Pradesh Bhawan, Ashoka Road in against of unconstitutional move of the United Progressive Alliance government towards their demand for withdrawal of Section- 4 of SC/ST (Reservation in Posts and Services) Bill 2008 and pass the bill in the true spirit of promoting social justice. Justice Rama Swami, PS Krishnan (Retired IAS officer), Pravin Rashtrapal, Congress MP and hundreds of faculty members from different universities participated in the conference and assured his support on the issue.

According to DSSM organising member Paul Divakar, "We had a huge rally, national conference and if government goes ahead with the Bill the whole Dalit community will come on road.

Dalit community is disappointed with this bill which has been passed by the Rajya Sabha on December 23, 2008 is slated to be introduced in the ensuing session of Lok Sabha commenced on February 12, 2009. This bill is once again a reflection of the discriminatory ethos that scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are fit only to occupy the lowest positions in society, said Divakar.

D Raja said that this inhuman move of the government is blocking the entry of the scheduled castes and tribes into specified PSUs and 47 educational institutions, the bill makes it easy to declare the SCs and the STs "unfit" for any job.

This is the shameful step of UPA government who is taking undue advantage of last session of the parliament. "Its time to come together to fight for oppressed," said Comrade Brinda Karat in the conference.

Government is spending crores of rupees on education to uplift the weaker section of the society and other side introducing a bill which blocks the opportunity for them said Pravin Rashtrapal, a Congress MP.

The ruling coalition at the centre stealthily passed the Bill in less than two minutes amid din in the House and without any discussion. It was a strategy employed during the December 2008 session by the government to pass many such bills without discussion. This type of caste based discrimination not only produces inhibition/humiliation among Dalit students, it also makes them take extreme steps like committing suicide as in the case of Senthil kumar in Central University, Hyderabad.

DSSM emerged from and within the students, faculty members, human rights activists and progressive individuals who are working on various issues of discrimination in education.

---