

# 'Govt lacks political will to pass Women's Bill'

If the Bill is not passed, all parties can at least adopt the same within their parties: T P Issar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Jan 17:** While leaders from various political parties have arrived at a consensus on passing the Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament, there is a difference of opinion on giving reservation to women on the basis of castes and sub-castes.

Speaking at the one-day multi-party consultation on facilitating women's participation in governance, organised by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) here on Wednesday, JD-U leader K B Shanappa said his party was not averse to the introduction of the proposed Bill. However, the Bill should include women candidates representing various castes and sub-castes. "Unless this is done, the Bill will

not have any meaning," he said.

Questioning the intentions of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre to pass the Bill in Parliament, Shanappa said the Government lacked political will to do the same.

He said it is unfortunate that the debate over the proposed Bill was sidelined during the Parliament session and the same was taken up for discussions only at the end of the session.

CPM leader K Prakash said political parties should presently aim at passing the Bill at the earliest.

Stating that India is a plural society, he said there was no

need for a debate on women's reservation on caste basis right now as this had the potential to create undesirable complications.

He fears that if the debate

***K Prakash criticised the Central Government's decision to hold consensus on the women's reservation issue, whereas privatisation and globalisation of Indian economy were introduced without a consensus meet.***

continues, "many groups and communities will be prompted to demand reservation accordingly". He emphasised the need to implement the Geeta Mukherji Report without any changes.

He criticised the Central Government's decision to hold

consensus on the women's reservation issue, whereas privatisation and globalisation of Indian economy were introduced without a consensus meet.

"I cannot understand the logic behind the cringing for consensus. The Government can always pass the Bill. Why does it want a consensus? The writing is very clear on

the wall - They simply do not want the Bill to be passed," opined Prakash.

The real empowerment of women would be meaningless unless land reforms and alternative electoral system are introduced.

While opposing the idea of

women's reservation on caste basis, BJP leader Suresh Kumar supported the idea of 'common minimum understanding programme'. He said that winning elections was a great hurdle for not only women but also taintless male candidates.

JD(S) leader Basavaraj Bommai lamented that more than inter-political wrangling there was intra-political pressure on the issue. If the Government failed to pass the Bill, all parties can at least adopt the same within their parties, he said.

Without socio-economic independence, women's empowerment would not have any meaning, said Bommai.

Kannada and Culture Minister Rani Satish emphasised the need for stricter enforcement

of curbing election expenses so that many women could participate in elections and also win.

Former Chief Secretary T P Issar spoke about the advantages of women governance by giving instances of popular political personalities like Indira Gandhi, Aruna Asaf Ali, Rani Laxmi Bai, Geeta Mukherji and others.

He said that women were generally good politicians and had even managed the country's affairs efficiently.

Vimala (CPM), B T Lalitha Naik (JD-S), Vimala Gowda (BJP), Vijaylakshmi Ram Bhat (JD-U), Sumitra (CPI), M A Gafoor (Cong), Jayatheertha (CPI), NIAS director Roddam Narasimha and Gender Studies Unit fellow Shaantha Mohan attended.