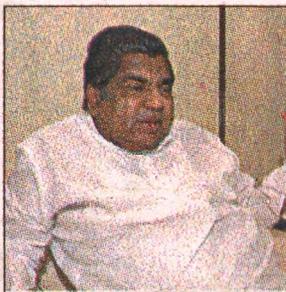


idate after polls' Women seek ommunal issues: Dharam more power and a quota



Dharam Singh

KPCC president, Mallikarjun Kharge has been successful in keeping the morale of the party cadre high, Mr Krishna would provide the cutting edge to our campaign," he explained.

Asked if he was in the race for the top post in the state, Mr Singh evaded a direct reply.

"I have never aspired for anything in politics. Whatever has come to me, has come on its own. I am a loyal soldier of the party, willing to do any task assigned by the high command. Not many may be aware of the fact that I did not wink even once when Madam Indira Gandhi wanted me to resign as Gulbarga MP to enable senior leader, Late C.M. Stephen contest in 1980," he said.

A veteran Congressman with a keen political acumen, Mr Singh admitted that the biggest challenge the party faces is calling the BJP's "bluff," which has vitiated the otherwise serene political and social atmosphere. "The BJP has indulged in a high-voltage

campaign of calumny and disinformation against the Congress on issues such as terrorism, internal security and price rise. We have to put the records straight. We are working out a cogent campaign strategy," Mr Singh disclosed.

He expressed fears that the BJP could whip up passions before the elections to polarise votes on communal lines. "This is because the UPA's pro-farmer and common man-centric Budget, has taken the wind out of the BJP's sails. So, bereft of a political or economic issue, they will have to fall back on communal issues. I have suggested to the party bigwigs to evolve an electoral strategy keeping this in mind," he signed off.

By OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bangalore, March 8:

When the cry for equality for women reached the peak, one man sighed wistfully and said, "Viva la the difference"(Long live the difference).It was left to one's imagination to ponder and decide what he was referring to.

But the issue of gender equality can no longer be shrugged off as just a recurrent plaint of the fairer sex. The fact that women are demanding a day for themselves to draw the attention of others, clearly means that the rest of the year is hardly theirs.

There is of course an occasional call by men, demanding a day for themselves which could be an indication of the insecurity they have been experiencing of late maybe because of the hue and cry over women's rights.

The city on Saturday celebrated International Women's Day with a rally, a walk and several functions to honour women who have made a mark in recent times.

The major political parties also celebrated the day with women leaders vociferously demanding thirty three per cent reservation for them in the state Assembly and Parliament.

A day earlier on Friday, woman advocates and

**A DAY
TO CELEBRATE**

judges had set the trend, appreciating the role of their fathers, brothers and spouses in helping them shape their career.

On Saturday, Karnataka high court chief justice, Cyriac Joseph, emphasised the need to strengthen the law to ensure the safety of women, especially the poor and helpless. "India is known for respecting elders and women. Yet, there is a need to amend and strengthen the existing laws so that women are reminded of their strength and power," he said at a function here.

Former deputy chief minister and Congress leader, Siddaramaiah too felt that the laws have to be strengthened to protect women. "Women already enjoy 33 per cent reservation in panchayats but this has not happened in Parliament and state Assemblies. I can assure you that all those women who are capable of winning the elections, would be certainly given an opportunity to contest," he said.

At the Dal(S) meeting, women demanded that at least 50 seats in the 224-seat state Assembly be reserved for them. www.rohininilekani.org



HONOURED: High court chief justice, Cyriac Joseph and former chief secretary, Teresa Bhattacharya felicitate Rohini Nilekani on International Women's Day. AA