

News / PTI feed /

# Candlelight vigil seeking early passage of Bill for disabled



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New Delhi, Dec 5 (PTI) Hundreds of disabled persons held a candlelight vigil at Jantar Mantar here today calling upon the Members of Parliament to allow the Houses to function so that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, which replaces an earlier legislation, can be passed.

"The Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment tried to move the Bill for consideration and passage. The Deputy Speaker of the Rajya Sabha urged all MPs to at least allow this Bill to pass. But our honourable members of the Opposition did not relent.

"We urge them to please spare a thought for the disabled person in the remotest village struggling to live a life of basic dignity. And above all, to please consider that this Bill is a completely non-political matter. We call upon all Members of Parliament to please allow the House to function so that this Bill can be passed," said Javed Abidi, honorary director, the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People.

On November 30, the Union Cabinet approved the proposed amendments to the legislation which proposes imprisonment of at least six months to not more than two years, along with a fine ranging between Rs 10,000 and Rs 5 lakh, for discriminating against differently-abled persons. It was introduced on Friday and was in today's agenda.

"On December 2, on the eve of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the entire country was looking at the Rajya Sabha in hopeful anticipation. It would have been an unprecedented gift for our brothers and sisters with disabilities had the Bill been passed.

"That did not happen. Our parliamentarians let politics triumph over the lives of millions of persons with disabilities ? one of the most marginalised populations ? an integral part of the people of this country that they claim to represent," said Abidi.

The Bill, which seeks to replace the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, proposes to increase reservation for those with benchmark disabilities in government jobs from present three per cent to four per cent, and in higher educational institutes from the existing three per cent to five per cent. PTI PLB SMN

This is unedited, unformatted feed from the Press Trust of India wire.