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Women groups to field independent candidate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, January 25: Unhappy with the low numbers of female candidates who figure on political party lists, women organisations have unanimously decided to back an independent woman candidate in Delhi.

Ranjana Kumari, Director of Centre for Social Research, was selected as the candidate at a meeting organised by the National Committee for Women.

"I have been selected as the consensus candidate. The logistics of the entire thing are being looked into and the other details are being worked out. As far as I am concerned, I am contesting for a principal," says Ranjana Kumari.

Though the constituency has not yet been decided, they want their candidate to stand against a "corrupt person". "The symbolic thing would be to stand against a corrupt candidate," Ranjana adds.

The Women's Movement has asked the other candidates who will stand against Ranjana in the constituency she decides to stand to withdraw their nomination or support her. "We are putting up just one symbolic candidature and asking them to atleast give us that one chance. If they don't we will fight them," says Ranjana.

"The National Commission has been forced to put up women candidates. We have been to every political party, asking them to give tickets to women candidates. The response has been bad," says Mohini Giri, chairperson of the National Commission for women.

Terming it as a "symbolic fight", everyone is excited about it. "At the meeting, everyone was very frustrated by the total indifference of all political parties and the fact that they have not given women a sufficient number of tickets. Everyone has the usual four per cent representation. We have decided to take on the system and put forth our own candidate," explained Kamla Nath of the Centre for Social Research.

Attended by members from the Joint Action Front for Women, All India Women's Congress, Nirantar, Stri Bal and the Women's Studies Programme of Delhi University, among others, the meeting has the backing of all principal women organisations.

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Knowing the costs involved in fighting an election, the core committee of the Women's Movement has asked all women to donate a part of their earnings for the cause. "We have appealed to all women to contribute anywhere between Rs 1 and Rs 1,000 from what they earn. In fact, we have already got a lot of contributions. The money will pour in once we have mobilised the women," Ranjana says confidently.

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