

# NRI's protest Indian govt's reservation move

SAM RAO

San Francisco, Calif.

A GROUP of 50 Indian Americans on May 29 participated in a protest march against the recent move by the Indian government to introduce 27 percent reservation in educational institutions. They walked from the University of San Francisco to the Indian Consulate.

"People all over the country are against this latest move and we decided to do something about it," said the organizers. The protestors included a fair mix of professionals and Indian students with IT professionals like Deepak Batra, Aneet Chopra, Sacramento State University student Milind Patel, and an MBA student from Santa Clara University Pankaj Aggarwal.

"The distance of about 1 mile was worth it and perfect to register our protest about an issue which is important to all of us," said Pradeep Agarwal, one of the organizers.

At the Consulate of India, the group met with the Indian Consul Prabhat Kumar Singh and presented him a memorandum. The memorandum was part of an online petition, which has resulted in almost 25,000 signatures by NRIs registering their protest. Consul Singh assured the delegates that the peti-



tion would be forwarded to the President of India.

"We are not against reservations per se but reservation in higher education is wrong. More appropriate would be preference based on economic conditions and also a focus on primary education—where many of the SC/ST groups need help. By blindly putting aside seats in higher educations, which are already limited in number, is a na-

tional waste," said Aggarwal.

Emphasizing the need for the march and protest, the protestors also issued a statement saying, "Many of the Indian students on learning about this, have felt a combination of grief, distrust, anger and betrayal. Many of them have felt cynical and dismissed it as yet another gimmick by yet another political party to garner votes. This is high time that we, as NRIs, support



## Charter of demands

■ A non-political expert committee to be created to review the implementation of quota system in education and work.

■ Implementation of the proposed extended reservation policy and any other new reservation policy to be withheld or kept in abeyance till the committee submits its report.

■ A better education infrastructure with scholarships to be created for free access to primary, elementary and secondary education to every stratum of the society.

■ Any vacant seats in present quota to be filled up strictly on merit, irrespective of caste, class and creed.

and encourage their movement against any reservations in education system that will slow down the progress of our country. It is our initiative to mobilize maximum momentum and send message to agitating doctors and other students that we are with them, morally and financially."

Speaking on the occasion, Aggarwal said that many students who join engineering and medical courses across the country through reserved seats dropout after the first year. "Most of these dropouts result from unprepared students hailing from SC/ST background. Such seats go vacant and a total waste for the nation and for deserving students," he added.

## Past & present come together on Asian-Indian-American Day



Kuchipudi dancers line up for a performance

SAM RAO

Mipitas, Calif.

THE Indian American community celebrated the Asian-Indian-American Day on May 27 at the Milpitas Library with educational and cultural programs. The event was organized by the Indian-American community and Friends of the Library and saw nearly 200 people in attendance including several non-Indians. The Day celebrates the contributions of the Asian Indians to California.

American born and raised students of Madhuri Kishore presented children performed Kuchipudi, Odissi and Kathak, the traditional dances of India.

"It takes us two hours just to get dressed in traditional dance costume," said four-year-old performer Shruti from Cupertino.

The 4-year old students of Kathak teacher Mukta Mutatkar performed short pieces to the delight of the appreciative crowd. Other notable presentations were Bhajans and Classical songs by students from

Bal Bharati School.

Local artists Ranjani Shinghal and Archana Jain presented their traditional Indian artwork. Kalyani Annamali's traditional Rangoli and Kollam designs on the floor drew a large crowd of youngsters.

The event also had handouts about the history of early Indian immigrants to California. Information were also presented on a curious group of 'Mexican-Hindus' residing in California since nearly 70 years. It seems due to racist immigration laws in the US at that time, Indians were not allowed to bring their spouses from India, and the laws did not allow them to marry local White woman either. This led to many Indian (mostly Punjabi) men marrying Mexican women, resulting in thousands of Mexican-Hindus who still reside in Central Valley of California. "I was most impressed to learn that one of the first NRI movements for Independence of India was launched in 1913 in San Francisco by the Gadar Party," said Ritu Vohra of Sunnyvale, after reading about the Californian 'Gadarites'.

