

February, 1, 2007

New Delhi.— Dressed as fishermen and tribals, over 6000 students participated in a march against poverty here today.

The march was part of a unique '9-is-mine' campaign urging the government to allocate nine percent of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to the sectors, as committed by it.

'If the government cannot see the tears of its children, cannot hear their screams, then incidents like Nithari (murders) will keep on taking place one after another. The government is not moved by anything and in fact there is nothing like the government. The children are here just to remind the government of the promises it had made decades ago. There are no new demands,' said Swami Agnivesh, a renowned social activist.

Activists said the march was organized a month before the announcement of the annual budget to remind the government of its promises.

'The government had promised to give us 9 percent of the GDP. It's not giving us. We want six percent for education and three percent for health. We want our due,' said Paramjeet, a student.

The effort was supported by 'Wada Na Todo Abhiyaan' (Keep Your Promises Campaign), a national coalition of over 900 development and grassroots organisations.

According to United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and Pacific, there is an estimated 350-400 million people below poverty line in India, 75 per cent of them in the rural areas. A report by the agency says poverty has been reduced by 10 per cent in the country over the last few years.

But data compiled by the Planning Commission says poverty level has come down in the country from 37 per cent of its billion plus population in 1993-94 to 27 percent in 1999-2000.(ANI)