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New Delhi



Spotlight on functioning of Indian democracy

Staff Reporter

'Citizens' Report on Governance and Development 2010' released

NEW DELHI: The number of Bills passed by Parliament declined from 47 in 2008 to 41 in 2009; more than 40 lakh cases were pending in State High Courts by December 31 last year. Many such findings were released here on Tuesday in the "Citizens' Report on Governance and Development 2010" by the National Social Watch.

The National Social Watch is a non-government organisation monitoring governance in the country. This is the seventh report brought out by the social watchdog organisation and evaluates four key institutions of the government -- Parliament, Judiciary, Executive and local self-government in the 14th Lok Sabha, which came to an end in mid-2009.

Releasing the report, Union Urban Development Minister S. Jaipal Reddy spoke about the "need to look at the quality of India's functioning democracy".

A highlight of the report this year is that it rates Members of Parliament based on their performance in the House. "The study decided to include four parameters -- attendance, participation in debates, number of questions asked and the number of private members' Bill proposed. On the basis of all the 545 MPs was evaluated," said NSW national convener Amitabh Behar.

According to the report, only four of the top ten performing MPs of the 14th Lok Sabha were re-elected in the 15th Lok Sabha. Former Communist Party of India MP from Trichur C.K. Chandrappan was adjudged the top performer in the 14th Lok Sabha by NSW.

Speaking about key findings of the report, Mr. Reddy suggested further improvements in the report methodology for the future. He further emphasised the need to study the role of the media in a democracy. He said that media exposure was important for MPs and that the "media should report the solid speeches made by the MPs in the House instead of carrying out sensational statements only".

Other speakers discussed various aspects of the report findings. Women's Feature Services director Pamela Philipose spoke about the health disparities; Jawaharlal Nehru University professor Amitabh Kundu discussed policy making and its impact and Democratic Governance Learning and Analysis democratic governance advisor (UNDP) John Samuel stressed that in wake of the report, it was important to understand the "politics of reclaiming the State".

In a special address, former Delhi University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Upendra Baxi discussed the need to reform the judicial system. He said higher numbers in the judiciary do not always lead to solution of problems. Speaking about the idea of being a "citizen", Prof. Baxi also suggested that "violence against citizenship" be studied carefully.

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