



Demonetization resulted in decline in Terror Funding, Hawala Trade, Human Trafficking, says Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad

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Union Law, Justice and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Thursday said the government's November 8 decision of demonetization had resulted in sharp decline in terror funding, hawala trade, supari killings and human trafficking, particularly of young girls as sex slaves, mainly from Nepal and the North East.

Indicating that the government would not hesitate to take steps to widen the tax base, he said that development was not possible without enlarging the tax kitty. "There is only about Rs. Five lakh crore in the kitty of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley for development and it needs to grow," he said.

Addressing a seminar, jointly organized by the Press Club of India, Indian Women Press Corps and the Supreme Court Lawyers' Conference, he said that a new India, much stronger in its unity and integrity, was emerging, transcending the barriers of caste, creed and religion.

Former Chief Justice of India M. N. Venkatachaliah who presided over the seminar on Fundamental Duties and Economic and Judicial Reforms stressed upon social evolution and education of young minds who can build a better India.

"Every government comes and goes. Our government is transformative government and tools of technology are actively aiding the good governance. There are 110 crore Aadhar cards and 104 crore mobile connections today. Digital governance means faster delivery and even poor and illiterate people in rural areas are showing a new confidence in embracing the digital technology which has given a new vision of hope," the Law and IT Minister said. He also cited examples of Imran Khan, a mathematics teacher from a school in Alwar, Rajasthan whose mobile apps had benefitted 40 lakh children and a woman Satama Devi, a beedi worker from Telangana who had learnt how to use Skype to talk to her grandson in Dubai. "People like these are change agents. They believe in this new fast emerging India," he said.

Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad said that Aadhar enabled bank payments through smart phone would prove to be a "game changer" and a tool of empowerment. He said that out of 125 crore people only 3.7 crore pay taxes and 99 lakh file Income Tax returns but have no taxable income, two crore people show annual income of Rs. 6 lakh and only 24 lakh have an annual income of Rs. 10 lakh and above.

Mr. Prasad, himself an activist during JP movement, said the present government has leaders who were all student activists from the days of Emergency and reiterated that the commitment of the government for independence of judiciary is complete.

Admitting that there were issues of infrastructure and judicial appointments, he said that 126 appointments in the higher judiciary were made in the past two years which was the highest since 1999. He said that 131 High Court judges had also been confirmed.

"There is meaningful cooperation between the government and the new Chief Justice of India Justice Khehar and all concerns of judiciary will be addressed," he added. The Minister asserted that independence of judiciary and media and individual liberty was sacrosanct for the government. He said that accountability of political establishment was a positive feature of the democracy. "The strength of democracy lies in bringing in positive changes like eliminating poll violence from Bihar by the efforts of the Election Commission," he said.

The Law and IT Minister said that a panel, led by Justice Sri Krishna, had been set up to give a report within three months on making India a hub of arbitration.

Veteran Congress leader Dr. Karan Singh, former Lok Sabha Secretary General Subhash Kashyap, former Chief Election Commissioner S Y Qureshi, former BSF chief Prakash Singh, former Governor A R Kohli, IWPC President Sushma Ramachandran, lawyer-activist Ashok Arora and PCI Secretary-General Vinay Kumar also participated in the seminar.

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