

# Doval invite to address judges queried

Our Legal Correspondent

**New Delhi, April 15:** An NGO has questioned a move to have national security adviser Ajit Doval address a conclave of Supreme Court judges today without a counterbalancing presence of human rights activists to present an alternative view. In a letter to Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur, the Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms has argued that the three-day judges' retreat in Bhopal that ends tomorrow should also invite rights activists to address it.

Apart from Doval, who spoke at a closed-door session on national security and the terrorism threat, the judges have been listening to experts from various other spheres, such as Reserve Bank governor Raghuram Rajan. Lawyer and rights activist Prashant Bhushan, the convener of the NGO, has written to Justice Thakur that Doval can only present one side of the constant conflict between security agencies and rights activists.

"Traditionally, there has been a conflict between the perspectives offered by the security agencies and... human rights organisations around the legitimacy of many actions of security agencies, some of which constitute a violation of human rights," the letter says. "Many such cases reach the courts for adjudication, where both sides are heard.... We think it may be inappropriate for the judges to be briefed only by the NSA in the absence of representatives from human rights organisations offering an alternative perspective... of how the actions of security agencies impact human rights." It adds: "Many credible human rights organisations like the People's Union for Democratic Rights, Human Rights Law Network, People's Union for Civil Liberties, etc, and noted human rights lawyers like Mr Colin Gonsalves, Ms Kamini Jaiswal, Ms Nitya Ramakrishnan, Ms Vrinda Grover and others, may also be considered, to be invited to this briefing of judges on national security and implications for human rights."

The NGO, a campaigner for judicial transparency, had in 2009 succeeded in thwarting the elevation of the controversial Karnataka High Court judge, Justice P.D. Dinakaran, to the Supreme Court on allegations of land-grabbing. Dinakaran, subsequently transferred to Sikkim High Court, resigned in 2010 after Parliament initiated impeachment proceedings against him.

Another judicial conclave - a joint meeting of high court chief justices and chief ministers - is scheduled in Delhi on April 24. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate it. One of the subjects on the meeting's agenda is how to speed up the disposal of an estimated three crore pending cases in various Indian courts, sources said. To this end, the conference will discuss infrastructure development, judicial reforms, the establishment of special commercial benches in the high courts, alternative dispute resolution systems such as arbitration, mediation and conciliation, and more computerisation.

The chief ministers' participation would boost the discussions on infrastructure, the sources added. The conference is held periodically to address pressing issues relating to the administration of justice.

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