

## NCPRI note on the Grievance Redress Bill

A legislation to provide redress of peoples' everyday grievances was introduced in Parliament in December 2011. The bill called the 'Right of Citizens for Time Bound Delivery of Goods and Services and Redressal of their Grievances Bill, 2011' provided a comprehensive grievance redress framework across the country to ensure the delivery of public services, social sector entitlements, and the accountability of delivery systems. It provided a decentralised, time-bound mechanism for receiving and redressing complaints of people. The bill was referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee, which gave its report in August 2012. The bill could not be taken up for consideration and passage and lapsed with the dissolution of the 15<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

The legislation is critical for empowering and enabling citizens to access their rights and entitlements. The Grievance Redress Bill was an 'RTI – part 2' as it followed the same, straightforward, decentralised and tested architecture of the RTI to enable citizens to ensure accountability in government functioning. The bill provided for grievance redress officers to be designated at every panchayat and ward level, who would be responsible for receiving and resolving complaints in a time-bound manner. If a complaint remained unresolved, the law provided an appeal mechanism and the appellate body was empowered to compensate the complainant and penalise the erring official. The bill required every public authority to develop a citizens' charter enumerating all the services, goods and obligations of the public authority along with relevant timelines, norms and standards.

**The bill must be immediately re-introduced in Parliament, debated and passed without any further delay.**

In December 2013 (during the debate on the Lokpal Bill), MPs from across party lines spoke out in support of the grievance redress bill. Shri Rahul Gandhi (INC), Shri Kapil Sibal (INC), Shri Arun Jaitley (BJP), Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad (BJP), Shri K. N. Balagopal, CPI(M), Shri Sitaram Yechury, CPI(M), Shri M. P. Achuthan, CPI and Shri Shivanand Tiwari, JD(U) spoke in support of this bill.

### **Position of the current BJP government on GR bill**

From the statements of the government made in Parliament, it appears that the government is reneging from its commitment to bring in a statutory framework for time-bound and effective redress of grievances.

In July 2014, the concerned Minister stated in Parliament- "Prime Minister's Office, vide a communication dated 24.06.2014, informed the Department of Personnel & Training and the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances that the following are part of Immediate Thrust Areas of the Government:-

(i) Passing of Citizens' Grievances Bill;..."

In December 2014, the concerned minister stated in Parliament- "The Government is committed to bringing in a legislation for ensuring effective redressal of grievances of citizens related to non-delivery of entitled goods and services by the Government. However, at this stage, no realistic time frame can be indicated for introduction of such a Bill in the Parliament."

In February & May 2015, the Minister reiterated in Parliament- "The Government is committed to bringing in a legislation for ensuring effective redressal of grievances of citizens related to non-delivery of entitled goods and services by the Government. However, at this stage, no realistic time frame can be indicated for introduction of such a Bill in the Parliament."

However in March 2016, the Minister stated in Parliament, "The Government is committed to ensuring efficient and timely delivery of public services, including timely and effective redressal of grievances of citizens related to non-delivery of entitled goods and services by the Government. For this purpose, a scheme known as Delivery of Services and Grievances Redressal Scheme – 2015 has been prepared. The ambit of the Scheme inter-alia includes goods and services being offered by the public authorities of the Government of India (with some exceptions). The Scheme also has provisions for administrative action with respect to delays, etc. in provision of designated services in specified timeframe."

Therefore, a comparison of the statements above show that the government instead of bringing in a statutory framework of grievance redress, which was identified by the PM as "Immediate Thrust Areas of the Government" is now replacing the proposal with a scheme. No details of the above-mentioned scheme are available in the public domain.