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Idea of democracy has shrunk, says expert

BANGALORE: Yogendra Yadav, senior fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, said on Tuesday that the idea of democracy had moved from a 'deep moral idea' to a 'narrow institutional checklist' on governance.

He said while democracy was spreading as the only viable way of governance, the idea of it had, in fact, shrunk. The big challenge, however, was finding a means to successfully evolve a democratic way of looking at the 'idea of democracy'.

Yadav was speaking as the moderator at a dialogue on 'Multiple meanings of democracy: Citizen voices from across the world,' where findings from Global Barometer Surveys (GBS) were detailed by ex-

perts, organised by the Center for Research in Social Science and Education and Jain University.

The panel discussion had representatives from the Arab region, Latin America, East Asia, Eurasia and Africa, who participated in the GBS (an effort to comprehensively measure, at a mass level, the current social, political, and economic atmosphere around the world), speaking on dominant trends in the region.

Dr Robert Mattes (Afrobarometer) said that the African nations had developed a schizophrenic understanding of democracy. However, what really stands out in these countries is their strife towards equal voting rights or equal access to elections.

Dr Christian Haerper (Eura-

sia Barometer) said that these countries, which were making a transformation from post-communist rule, gave primacy to the idea of nationalism.

The Arab countries, however, were battling four major arguments against democracy, said Dr Mohammed al-Masri (Arab Barometer). He said that most Arab nations thought that democracy was not compatible with the Arab world, and that implementing democracy would be a threat to the security.

Though these countries were in the mood to reject authoritarianism, their aspiration for true democracy was, however, overshadowed by shariat. The countries were striving for dignity, social and economic justice, he added.

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