

BUDGET RUN-UP

Long time before India's Budget scores centum in transparency**ECONOMY BUREAU**

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If you thought you knew all about how the government spends and where your money goes, think again. According to a new Open Budget Index created by the Washington based Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), India ranks lower than countries such as Botswana, Peru, Romania and Czech Republic on the amount of Budget related information that it provides to its people. Of the 59 countries studied, India scored a low 52% and was categorized amongst the 30 countries, which provide "significant information to citizens". The top slot went to France, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States, who were termed as providing extensive information. The Index illustrates how strong transparent practices are possible in both developed and developing countries. South Africa and Slovenia are both cases in point, it says. "In fact nine out of ten countries fail to provide information on the Budget to its people," the report states. "In 53 of the 59 countries examined, citizens are limited by lack of access to information. In 10 countries, government accounts are closed books," it adds.

India scored poorly on issues relating to the powers of an auditor, availability of government audits, providing a pre budget statement, a mid-year review and a year-end review of the budget. The Right to Information Act is amongst the only issues on which India scores. The Index considers it to be one of the only measures through which citizens of the country can get information on the Budget. The Index determines how accountable and transparent a country's government is and judges each country based upon how much "accurate, timely and comprehensive information the government provides to its people during each stage of the budget cycle."

Open Budget Index 2006**• Provides extensive information to citizens**

France, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States

• Provides Significant information to citizens

Botswana, Brazil, Czech Republic, Norway, Peru, Poland, Romania, South Korea, Sweden

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