Democracy index: India slips 10 slots to 51st position

New Delhi:

India has slipped 10 places to 51st position among 167 countries on the Democracy Index, a global ranking of the “most and least” democratic countries prepared by The Economist Intelligence Unit, primarily due to an “erosion of civil liberties in the country”.

The report, released on Wednesday, said India is at 51st position after its score fell from 7.23 (out of 10) in 2018 to 6.90 in 2019, and attributed India’s “democratic regression” to the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir’s special status, suspension of internet in the newly former UT and protests over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

These events, the annual report suggested, are key reasons for India being awarded a score of 6.9 out of 10 — the lowest it has touched since the inception of the Democracy Index in 2006.

India’s decline coincides with what the report says has been a poor year for democracy globally. India remains well above the 2019 global average of 5.44. India’s highest score was 7.91 in 2014 and since then it has declined.

“The Indian government stripped the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) state of its special status by repealing two key constitutional provisions granting it powers of autonomy....Furthermore, Article 35A prevented Indian residents from other states from purchasing land or property in J&K....Ahead of the move, the government deployed a large number of troops in J&K, imposed various other security measures and placed local leaders under house arrest, including those with pro-India credentials. The government also restricted internet access in the state,” the report said.

On the controversial NRC, the Democracy Index said, “A separate citizenship registration exercise in Assam...has excluded 1.9 million from the final list of NRC. The vast majority of people excluded from NRC are Muslims. The ruling nationalist BJP says that most of the people excluded from the list are immigrants from Bangladesh, whose government denies this....The new citizenship law has enraged
the large Muslim population, stoked communal tensions and generated large protests in major cities.”

The report, which has evaluated countries on their civil liberties, political culture, political participation, functioning of government and their electoral processes and pluralism in countries, however, recorded a “steady and significant upward trajectory” in people’s political participation globally, indicating that an increasing number of people are getting involved in the political processes and protesting in comparison to the years before.