

Take interim steps for tribunal postings: SC

The Supreme Court on Monday directed Attorney General K.K. Venugopal and amicus curiae Arvind Datar to discuss an interim arrangement for the committee appointing judicial members to key tribunals.

The apex court is considering the question whether the Central Tribunal, Appellate and other Authorities (Qualifications, Experience and other conditions of Service of Members) Rules of 2017 is a blow to the independence of the tribunals.

The development came on several petitions, primarily one by Congress MP Jairam Ramesh, challenging the provisions of the 2017 Rules and the Finance Act, 2017, introducing the modifications in key tribunal appointments.

“The petitions are pending here. But tribunals have to be manned. We have to find an interim solution,” Chief Justice Dipak Misra, heading a three-judge Bench, observed.

Mr. Datar said the tenure of the chairperson of the tribunals should be extended to five years instead of the present three.

He said the committee appointing the judicial members to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and other tribunals should comprise only two members from the Centre instead of the present three, and two with judicial background.

He said the Finance Act strikes at the root of the independence of quasi-judicial bodies, such as the NGT. Mr. Venugopal said the government is agreeable to extension of the tenure of the Chairperson.

The next hearing will be on February 2 when the government may argue on the independence of quasi-judicial bodies.

END

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