

## Speed up trial of politicians, says SC

On March 10, 2014, a Supreme Court Bench of Justice (retired) R.M. Lodha and Justice Kurian Joseph had ordered the government to conclude criminal trials in which charges have been framed against sitting MPs and MLAs “speedily and expeditiously” within a year.

The apex court had ordered the trials to be held on a day-to-day basis.

Only “extraordinary circumstances” would justify a trial exceeding the one-year deadline, Justice Lodha’s Bench had made it clear then.

Referring to the March 2014 order, Justice Gogoi’s Bench said it wanted the government to report back by December 13 on how many of these 1,581 cases were finally decided and how many ended in acquittals and convictions for MPs and MLAs.

The court further directed the Centre to place on record how many cases have been filed against sitting and former legislators between 2014 till date. The apex court said it wanted details of the status of each such case and how the criminal trials ended in every one of them.

Additional Solicitor General A.N.S. Nadkarni, for the Centre, submitted that the Centre was not averse to the setting up of special courts to exclusively try political persons.

He said there was no room for a second opinion that corruption and criminality should be wiped out of politics.

Mr. Nadkarni said the government would support any move for the “utmost expeditious disposal” of criminal cases involving political persons.

However, on a plea by petitioner and Supreme Court advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay for a life ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections, the government remained non-committal, simply saying that the recommendations of the Law Commission and the Election Commission (EC) were under its active consideration.

END

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