

## Corrupt MPs, MLAs return to power: SC

MLAs and MPs who face investigation for possessing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income, always tend to bounce back to power. This is a phenomenon seen in the past 25 to 30 years, the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday.

The hearing, on a petition filed by Lok Prahari seeking a mechanism to investigate the source of income of politicians, saw the Centre give details of a probe into the assets of 26 Lok Sabha members, two Rajya Sabha members and 215 MLAs in a sealed cover.

A Bench of Justices J. Chelameswar and S. Abdul Nazeer asked if this phenomenon of returning to power, coupled with the mercurial rise in the assets of politicians just within a span of five years between two successive elections, was a product of ineffective investigation or of some “immunity” provided to them.

“If an MLA’s or MP’s assets have seen a 10X [10 times] rise in 2019 from what he revealed in 2014 should you not conduct an inquiry into the very propriety of a person holding public office enjoying such phenomenal rise in his assets ... The moment a candidate has shown 1,000% increase in his income in the past five years, please have a mechanism to conduct an enquiry,” Justice Chelameswar addressed the government.

“Income under each head should be probed. All these should be inquired. The public needs an answer. The people should get to know the state of affairs. It is not enough that a legislator discloses a legitimate source of income. It is important to inquire that how did the person get in that position to earn that income.”

### ‘Notify Fast-track courts’

The Bench observed the government should notify special fast-track criminal courts to try MPs and MLAs in corruption cases. Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal responded that prompt criminal action for disproportionate assets is taken whenever the source of income of an MLA or MP is found bogus.

“Law enforcement agencies take action. Perhaps they would straight away, even without a preliminary enquiry, register an FIR...,” the Attorney-General submitted. Scoffing at this assurance, Justice Chelameswar said “in the past 25 to 30 years, we have seen investigative agencies take no action against such MLAs and MPs.”

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