

Nagendar Sharma, Hindustan Times

Email Author

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## In UPA focus: action against corrupt judges

A review of the present system of appointment of judges and exemplary action against corrupt judges will be the focus of judicial reforms of the UPA government, to be carried out in consultation with the higher judiciary.

“These issues will be taken up with the Chief Justice of India (CJI) soon to put the much anticipated judicial reforms on fast track,” Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily told Hindustan Times.

“More objectivity is certainly required in the appointment of judges and the mechanism to check corruption in judiciary needs to be updated. I intend consulting the higher judiciary on these,” Moily said.

The law minister made it clear that his vision of reforms did not include “any confrontation at all with the judiciary. I do not believe in a blame game,” he said.

The issue of appointment of high court and Supreme Court judges has been hotly debated in recent times.

It was changed in 1993, following a Supreme Court judgement, which gave the appointment powers to a committee of seniormost judges in the country and virtually ended the government role in the matter.

Earlier, the judges were appointed by the government in consultation with the CJI. Moily said the post-1993 judges appointments procedure “needs to be looked into. There is a view that it may require a change.”

There have been complaints of senior judges being ignored for promotions to supreme court by the judges committee responsible for appointments and promotions.

The law minister said there have been serious concerns from within the judiciary on the 16 year-old system, and there was “nothing wrong in suggesting to the higher judiciary that a re-look would only improve the system.”

Asked about the increasing allegations of corruption against sitting supreme court and high court judges, Moily said, “It is a serious issue, which should not be looked at from the point of view of discrediting any institution.”

He said the Judges Inquiry Act, 1968, which lays down the procedure for taking action against corrupt judges, “definitely needs a fresh look.”

Moily said the UPA government, in its first term, twice attempted to amend this Act to make it more transparent. “We may have to work on this bill again, but we are determined to bring it before the parliament soon and get it passed.”

The law minister said the fresh changes to the Act will be discussed with the judiciary. “Unlike many other institutions, the judiciary cannot defend itself in the media everyday, therefore we should be careful while leveling allegations against the important institution.”

Moily said he was in favour to provide safeguards to the judiciary while implementing the Right to Information Act (RTI). “If we are able to provide confidence to the judiciary that no information will be misused, I think there will be no resistance.”

The law minister said he would soon be coming out with an action plan for his 200 days in office, as directed by the prime minister.

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