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Sudershan Reddy to head Sen impeachment panel

P. Sunderarajan

NEW DELHI: Chief Justice of India K. G. Balakrishnan has named Justice B. Sudershan Reddy of the Supreme Court chairman of the three-member panel set up by the Rajya Sabha to look into the issue of impeachment proceedings against Justice Soumitra Sen of the Calcutta High Court.

This was announced by Union Law and Justice Minister M. Veerappa Moily here on Friday.

“In the last 60 years, impeachment proceedings have not been successful. This time it is going to happen in Soumitra Sen’s case,” Mr. Moily said.

Justice Reddy replaces Justice D.K. Jain, who indicated earlier this month that he would not be able to serve on the panel. Reiterating the government’s resolve to reduce the pendency of criminal cases, including those involving corruption, he said 100 CBI courts would be set up for expeditious trial of cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

As for criminal cases of a heinous nature, including those against politicians, the Minister said the government would pay serious attention so that fast track courts could complete the trial quickly.

Replying to a query, Mr. Moily denied that the government was delaying the execution of the death sentence on Afzal Guru, who has been convicted in the Parliament attack case. Noting that a number of similar cases were already awaiting execution pending decisions on mercy petitions, he said, “You cannot pick, choose and hang. Nowhere does it happen in the world, including Pakistan.”

Noting that no country which had the rule of law could have a hanging carried out “at the discretion of a political party,” Mr. Moily said there was need for evolving a mechanism for quick disposal of mercy petitions.

To another question on giving the Central Bureau of Investigation permission to prosecute Kerala CPI(M) secretary Pinarayi Vijayan in a graft case, the Minister wondered why the Marxist leader was hesitant to face the court. “In a corruption case, politics should not be brought in... If he has faith in the judiciary, why should he worry? If a particular person is innocent, why is he hesitant to face the judiciary?”