

Supreme Court judges agree to make their assets public

J. Venkatesan
August 27, 2009

Information to be put on court website



K.G. Balakrishnan

New Delhi: The judges of the Supreme Court, including Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan, will make public the statements of assets they declared at the time of their appointment to the Supreme Court and subsequent additions, if any.

This decision was taken on Wednesday at a Full Court meeting, presided over by Justice Balakrishnan. The meeting was a sequel to the CJ's announcement on Monday that consensus was being evolved on disclosure of assets. Except Justice J.M. Panchal, who was on medical leave, all judges participated in the nearly two-hour deliberations. The sanctioned strength of the Supreme Court is 31 including the CJ. There are eight vacancies at present.

"We have decided in principle to put our assets on the [Supreme Court] website, but regarding the modalities, in what manner or form, we have not yet decided," authoritative sources told *Hindu The*. Asked whether there was consensus on making public the assets, the sources said: "Whatever decision we take is only through consensus and we have passed a unanimous resolution. The resolution is to be released after it is signed by all the judges."

Asked to elaborate, the sources said: "At present, judges disclose their assets to the Chief Justice of India as per the procedure in the 1997 'Restatement of values.' Now it will be put on the website."

Would such disclosure pertain only to the judge concerned or would it cover members of his family too? "It will be strictly in accordance with the 1997 procedure. Of course, each judge has a different form and we have to see how it can be updated."

To a question whether Wednesday's resolution covered High Court judges also, the sources said: "We can't give any direction to the High Courts. They will have to take independent decisions. However, it is expected that they will follow us."

The issue of public disclosure of assets by judges came to the fore after Justice D.V. Shylendra Kumar of the Karnataka High Court and Justice K. Kannan of the Punjab and Haryana High Court voluntarily disclosed their assets and made them public.

The Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reform has been highlighting the need for transparency and public disclosure of assets by judges, and the Full Court decision is an exercise in that direction.

At present, there is no law governing the declaration of assets by judges. In the recently concluded Parliament session, the government introduced a Bill to make declaration of assets by judges mandatory. But since it contained a clause that such a declaration would not come within the ambit of the Right to Information Act, the Bill was withdrawn. The government has announced that it will be re-introduced in the winter session with amendments.

[Judge's details on website](#)

Bangalore Staff

Reporter writes:

Justice Shylendra Kumar's declaration of assets has now been put on the web.

On Monday, the judge handed over a list of his assets to the Registrar-General of the Karnataka High Court. On Wednesday, a webpage on Google Sites — <http://sites.google.com/site/justdvskumar/> — carried purported details of the assets of the judge. Justice Kumar had written an article on judges declaring their assets and the CJI reacted against it.

<http://www.hindu.com/2009/08/27/stories/2009082758210100.htm>