

Reduce pendency of cases: Manmohan

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'Judiciary, executive must work together'

— Photo: Ramesh Sharma



A joint initiative: (From right) Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Chief Justice of India K.G. Balakrishnan and Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily at the joint conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of the High Courts in New Delhi on Sunday.

NEW DELHI: Expressing serious concern over the huge number of pending court cases, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Sunday called upon the judiciary and the executive to work together to eliminate the “scourge.”

Addressing a joint conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices here, Dr. Singh said: “I can assure this august gathering with all the emphasis at my command that my government will not be found wanting at any level in this joint effort ...We promise to match each step of the judiciary with two of our own. We will not hesitate to walk the extra mile at every opportunity.”

Urging the entire legal system and each of its rungs to function as a “seamless web and an indivisible whole,” he emphasised that all vacant judicial posts should be filled up expeditiously with meritorious individuals.

The State judicial academies should be strengthened to build the capacities of judicial officers.

Dr. Singh called for comprehensive computerisation and the ultimate linking of all the courts into one mega judicial information grid. All pending cases should be screened to enable the disposal of many old cases as moot or infructuous.

Agreeing that despite the recent increases in judicial strength there was scope for significant future increases in court strength, Dr. Singh said that would be subject to quick filling of existing vacancies.

He rued that the plea bargaining provided for by the law since 2005 had not been fully utilised so far and that the Gram Nyayalaya Act enacted in January was yet to be implemented.

Pointing out the Central government was committed to providing assistance for the setting up of Gram Nyayalayas, Dr. Singh said that though there could be differing views on the adequacy of the assistance being provided, that should not come in the way of bringing the Act into force.

“Once the Act is fully implemented, we will have more than 5,000 courts at the intermediate Panchayat level. These will bring justice to the doorsteps of the common people, who currently feel

that getting justice in India is not only time-consuming and costly, but sometimes also an intractable proposition.”

He informed the conference that the Centre had decided to establish 71 additional CBI courts in different States on the advice of the Chief Justice of India. “Fast track courts should conduct their business differently and faster than normal courts. Only then shall we be able to tackle pendency in cases.”

Dr. Singh regretted that despite the pronouncements of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, a large number of under-trials were still languishing in jails, many of them for periods longer than they would have served had they been sentenced.

Referring to the efforts being undertaken by the Ministry of Law and Justice to work out a roadmap for judicial reforms, he said a national consultation with jurists and stakeholders would be held here shortly to draw out the broad contours and set the stage for the reforms.

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