

CJI defends spouse allowance claim

New Delhi, Jan. 16 (PTI): The Chief Justice of India today defended his decision to seek a daily allowance for his wife when the couple recently went on a foreign tour, saying it was being provided for several years.

"Continuously to my knowledge since several years, the allowance was paid because somebody who goes abroad should eat something. That is why... otherwise, in a foreign country one cannot survive without eating. Sometime, it is (the allowance) permissible under our rules," Chief Justice K.G. Balakrishnan told a news channel.

He was asked about the recent controversy relating to the Supreme Court secretary-general writing a letter to the government seeking the benefit for his wife.

The apex court registry had on Friday come out with a statement defending the Chief Justice, a day after the government, in response to an RTI application, said there was a provision only for air-tickets for the spouse of the CJI and those of other judges of the Supreme Court.

On the recent Right to Information Act controversy, the CJI denied that he was personally opposed to the disclosure of assets by judges and cautioned that information sought under the RTI Act could at times seriously affect the image of the judiciary.

"At no point of time I was against disclosure of assets. Sometimes, some people will say that give some unfavourable report against (the) Chief Justice. Sometimes good report about him," he said.

"If these are published or some (information) under the RTI are published... he is a sitting Chief Justice, it will seriously affect the image of judiciary. At present in the RTI Act, there is no exemption for judiciary," he said.

Referring to the row relating to Justice P.D. Dinakaran of Karnataka High Court, he said the "vilification" campaign was started against the judge only after his name was recommended for elevation to the Supreme Court.

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