

``Time for enforcing judicial accountability''

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By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24, 2005 (). The former Chief Justice of India, J.S. Verma, has called for legislation on judicial accountability, based on the resolutions passed by the Supreme Court, to check the erosion of people's trust in the judiciary and to effectively probe charges of judicial corruption.

"Time has come for enforcing judicial accountability, but it should be done by the judiciary itself. Any external effort would be dangerous for the judiciary's independence," Mr. Justice Verma said in the BBC Hindi special programme, *Aapki Baat BBC Ke Saath*.

The Supreme Court passed the three resolutions on May 7, 1997 and they were sent to the Prime Minister on December 1, 1997 for making a law on judicial accountability. "Unfortunately it has not happened so far," Mr. Justice Verma said.

Impeachment of judges did not work and it was clear from the Ramaswamy case. Hence, legislation was a must. Till a law is made, a committee, headed by the Chief Justice and comprising senior judges, should look into allegations against judges. If they found that a case was fit for inquiry, appropriate action could be taken. "This would bring about transparency in the judicial system and deter baseless complaints," Mr. Justice Verma said.

Asked why the rich and powerful escaped any punitive action no matter how serious their wrongdoings were, he said: "It is unfortunate that those who wield power, because of either money or position, get away despite having committed wrongs as first of all, they cannot be arrested; if they are nabbed, then cases against them are not registered properly, and if at all cases are registered, the investigation is not carried out and finally the delay in hearing of cases ensures that conviction of the powerful does not take place."