

Delay in such cases would erode public confidence

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has advocated the need to set up Supreme Court benches in different regions in the country, including one at Chennai, to bring the judicial system closer to people.

Concurring with the recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law and Justice to have separate benches in different regions, the Vice President said “I think it is high time we had more benches because in a country as vast as India the litigants have to travel long distances and spend a huge amount of money and energy”.

Shri Naidu made the observations while addressing the gathering at the launch of a book chronicling his two years in office titled ‘Listening, Learning and Leading’ by Union Home Minister, Shri Amit Shah, in Chennai today.

It was not only the legislature and the executive that should become more responsive to people, the judicial processes must become more people-friendly, the Vice President stressed.

Emphasising the urgency to decide election petitions and criminal cases against sitting MPs and MLAs in a time-bound manner, he said, it has been found that election petitions and criminal cases were not decided even for the entire term of the legislators defeating the very purpose of the election laws.

Calling for expeditious decisions by the Chairpersons of Legislative bodies in cases involving disqualification of members defecting to other parties, Shri Naidu observed that the anti-defection law was not being implemented in letter and spirit.

The Vice President said because of the inaction of the Speaker or Chairman the legislators not only continue in the new party but also become Ministers in a few cases. "This kind of travesty of justice should not be tolerated", he emphasized and said that delay in such cases would erode public confidence in the judicial and legislative bodies.

Suggesting special judicial tribunals to decide such cases in a reasonable time of six months or one year, the Vice President called for revisiting the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, containing anti-defection provisions, to ensure a time bound disposal of such cases and make it more effective by plugging loopholes.

Shri Naidu also referred to the figures mentioned by the Chief Justice of India recently about heavy pendency of cases in various courts and said "apparently, there are nearly 60,000 cases pending in the Supreme Court and nearly 44 lakh cases in the High Courts. We need to take action to reduce this heavy pendency. Justice delayed, as is often said, is justice denied", he added.

The Vice President said the law enforcement machinery and the justice dispensing structures must be accessible, credible, equitable and transparently even-handed.

Expressing his happiness over the decision of the government to increase the number of judges in the Supreme Court by 10 per cent, the Vice President said that a number of civil and criminal cases have been pending for over 25 years and wanted the Supreme Court to have two divisions-- one dealing with Constitutional matters and another with appeals.

He said the proposal for two divisions merits serious consideration "because it would enable the Supreme Court to devote more time to Constitutional issues and make it more accessible to common people".

Shri Naidu said the procedure for appointment of judges might also have to be revisited and a credible, transparent process instituted which will steer clear of avoidable controversies.

Urging Parliamentarians to refrain from dysfunctional behaviour, the Vice President urged political parties to adopt a code of conduct for legislators and other elected representatives.

Stating that media - the fourth estate, also plays an important role in shaping public discourse, enhancing accountability of the government and providing news and views on various events around the world, he said "a free and vibrant media keeps democracy alive and can enrich the quality of life of people through information, education, entertainment and insightful analysis".

Cautioning against unauthentic media posts, he said there was a need for need media literacy to identify fake news, biased analysis and material intended to promote hatred, division and discontent.

Shri Naidu said "the media should be a dispassionate watchdog and an honest messenger. Media should be the catalyst of positive change and be the voice of the voiceless. It should question and seek answers and present even ugly truths in such a manner that social transformation occurs in positive direction. It should also help build public awareness and motivate people to join societal movements for cleanliness, health, hygiene and education.

Referring to the untapped demographic dividend and the fundamentally sound Indian economy that was growing faster than the economies of most other countries, he said the circumstances were excellent to transform our country and called for focussing on five Ds - 'Discuss, Debate, Decide, Decentralize and

Deliver. "This can transform the quality of our polity", he added.

The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri Banwarilal Purohit, the Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah, the Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Information & Broadcasting, Shri Prakash Javadekar, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Shri O. Panneerselvam, eminent Agricultural Scientist, Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, former ISRO Chairman, Dr. K. Kasturirangan, veteran journalist and Editor of Tughlak, Shri S. Gurusamy, the Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group, Dr. Pratap C. Reddy, Popular Actor, Shri Rajnikanth, the President, Education Promotion Society of India and Founder Chairman of VIT, Dr. G. Viswanathan, All India Badminton Coach, Shri Pullela Gopichand and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

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