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Justice N.V. Ramana set to take over as 48th CJI

Chief Justice Bobde makes formal recommendation to govt.

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde has recommended Justice N.V. Ramana, the senior-most judge of the Supreme Court, as the next top judge.

The recommendation to the government was followed by the publication of a short statement on Wednesday, informing that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's October 6 complaint to the CJI naming Justice Ramana was dismissed under an in-house procedure after due consideration.

Complaint dismissed

"A complaint dated October 6, 2020, sent by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh to the Supreme Court was dealt with under the In-House Procedure and the same, on due consideration, stands dismissed. It be noted that all the matters dealt with under the In-House Procedure being strictly confidential in nature, are not liable to be made public," the statement, published on the Supreme Court website, said.

Mr. Reddy had complained that Justice Ramana was influencing the Andhra Pradesh High Court judiciary to destabilise his govern-

Way to the top

A brief profile of Justice N.V. Ramana

Aug. 27, 1957: Born in an agricultural family in Ponnavaaram village in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh

Feb. 10, 1983: Enrolled as an advocate

June 27, 2000: Appointed permanent judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court

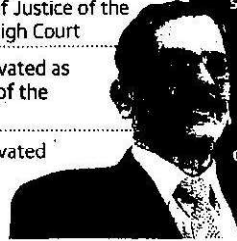
March 10-May 20, 2013: Functioned as the Acting Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court

Sept. 2, 2013: Elevated as the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court

Feb. 17, 2014: Elevated as a judge of the Supreme Court

■ He has practised in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Central and Andhra Pradesh Administrative Tribunals and the Supreme Court in civil, criminal, constitutional, labour, service and election matters

■ Justice Ramana specialises in constitutional, criminal, service and inter-State river laws



ment. The complaint was sent shortly after a Bench led by Justice Ramana started hearing and fast-tracking hundreds of criminal cases against Ministers, legislators and politicians pending in trial courts across the country.

In an affidavit filed with the election nomination papers in 2019, Mr. Reddy had declared that there were 31 criminal cases pending against him with the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate and different police stations in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Justice Ramana is now set to take over as the 48th Chief Justice of India from April 24. Chief Justice Bobde handed over a copy of his letter of recommendation to Justice Ramana on Wednesday after sending it to the government.

The Centre had recently asked Chief Justice Bobde, who is retiring on April 23, to initiate the transition process to the top judicial office.

Justice Ramana will be the CJI till August 26, 2022.

A grounding in civil liberties

Justice N.V. Ramana remembers the excesses committed during the Emergency

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

Many years before he began his journey, which will eventually see him being sworn in as the 48th Chief Justice of India, Nuthalapti Venkata Ramana undertook an arduous journey by truck with ₹10 in his pocket.

The journey was to the home of his maternal aunt. The year was 1975. The young man had heeded his father's advice to stay away from their agrarian home at Ponnayaram village after word spread that the government was going to proclaim Emergency.

The father feared that the police would arrest his son, who had never hid his passion for civil liberties.

"In hindsight, I wish my father had given me some more money," Justice N.V. Ramana recounted the incident recently.

He said excesses such as the Emergency impacted generations.



Justice N.V. Ramana

In January 2020, a Bench led by Justice Ramana ripped the veil of secrecy shrouding months of restrictions imposed in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Bench made it mandatory for the government to publish each and every one of its orders that crippled the fundamental freedoms of over 7 million Kashmiri people following the abrogation of Article 370.

The Bench held that a

right cannot be used against itself. The extensive reach of the Internet cannot be cited as a reason to restrict the right.

"Freedom of speech and expression includes the right to disseminate information to as wide a section of the population as possible," Justice Ramana observed in the judgment.

Part of many decisions

Justice Ramana, as Supreme Court judge, has been part of various decisions ranging from electoral issues and rights of women to bringing the Chief Justice of India's office within the ambit of the Right to Information (RTI).

In 2019, a five-judge Bench, of which Justice Ramana was a member, declared the CJI's office a public authority accountable under the RTI to provide information sought in public interest.

However, Justice Ramana, in a separate opinion, said

"RTI should not be used as a tool of surveillance".

Paternalistic notion

A Bench led by Justice Ramana, in a recent judgment, criticised the paternalistic notion that homemakers neither work nor contribute anything of economic value to the household.

Justice Ramana's judgment in the Karnataka MLAs' disqualification case said it was time to "reconsider strengthening certain aspects of the Tenth Schedule".

The verdict said that horse-trading political parties and partisan Speakers were denying citizens a stable government.

In his speech at a Madras Bar Association function amid the controversy surrounding the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's letter to the CJI, Justice Ramana highlighted the need to "hold on to principles and be fearless in decisions".