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Bangalore professor helps South Sudan draft statute

Mathang Seshagiri | TNN

Bangalore: As a high school student in Afghanistan, Prof. Sandeep Shastri would curiously listen to tales of Sudan from his classmates from Africa's biggest country. During the four years in Afghanistan, his Sudanese friends, mostly children of

► **South Sudan may adopt Art 356, P 5**

diplomats, would talk of their country's rich natural resources and of a progressive African nation.

Four decades later, Shastri, now pro vice-chancellor at Bangalore's Jain University, is helping give South Sudan — which takes birth on July 9 — its first constitution.

Shastri, an international consultant with the Forum of Federa-



Sandeep Shastri (left) is the only Indian engaged in public debates being held

across the land-locked autonomous region of South Sudan on the framing of the constitution

tions, a Canada-based think-tank, is the only Indian engaged in a series of public debates being held across

the land-locked autonomous region of southern Sudan in the run-up to framing the constitution. A referendum for the independence of southern Sudan in January this year saw nearly 99% of the electorate opting for secession — a major step towards the creation of the independent nation of South Sudan.

"I participated in three public debates in Juba, Wau and Rumbeck in May this year. There's a lot of excitement among the people, and they want every aspect of the constitution to be discussed and debated. Although there is a lot of support from western countries, they are particularly keen on learning from newer democracies like India. There's abject poverty, but also a great sense of hope among the people," he says.

South Sudan is keen on adopting Article 356 too

Chethan Shivakumar



ALL SMILES: Sandeep Shastri, pro-vice chancellor, Jain University, at an interaction with The Times of India in Bangalore on Saturday

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Bangalore: Prof Sandeep Shastri, pro-vice-chancellor at Bangalore's Jain University, who is now engaged in the framing of a constitution for the newly created South Sudan, talks of several similarities in the approach to framing of the constitution between India and South Sudan.

"Just as India took three years to give itself a constitution, South Sudan too wants to take about three-five years to frame a constitution. The comprehensive peace agreement, agreed to by Sudan and South Sudan has become the transitory constitution for the young country. India too did the same by adopting the Government of India Act of 1935 as its interim constitution," he explains, anxious about the birth of the Republic of South Sudan on July 9.

Shastri, who cautiously studied the recent constitutional crisis in Karnataka, says the African nation is keen on adopting Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. "There is a great deal of interest there on how a president is empowered to dismiss a government.

DATELINE SOUTH SUDAN

- Becomes independent nation on July 9
- About the size of Germany and France put together
- One of the poorest nations in Africa
- Has just 37 km of asphalted roads
- Rich in natural resources, especially oil

This is a model alien to Western countries, and the lawmakers there are studying the pros and cons of having this provision in their constitution. I have also spoken at length on how there have been cases of this provision being misused in India," he explains.

Shastri is also excited about having a bunch of babus from South Sudan and other African countries like Ethiopia and Uganda over to Bangalore for an intensive programme in public administration. Starting 2012, he plans to offer a two-year MA in Public Administration to officials from African countries at Jain University, a two-year-old deemed university.