

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Bangalore professor helps South Sudan draft statute

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 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 Federations, 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

"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. This is a model alien to Western countries, and the law-makers 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.