

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

Krishnamurthy for law to regulate political parties

It is crucial to improve the electoral system, says former CEC



SHARING IDEAS: (From left) The former judge of the Karnataka High Court B.K. Somasekhara, the former Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Jain University Sandeep Shastri interacting with students at a seminar in Bangalore on Monday. — PHOTO: K. GOPINATHAN

Special Correspondent

BANGALORE: Enacting a separate legislation to regulate political parties, as recommended by a committee headed by the former Chief Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, is crucial to improve the health of our electoral system and democracy, said the former Chief Election Commissioner T.S. Krishnamurthy.

Speaking at a seminar on electoral reforms, organised by the Youth Against Corruption, here on Monday, he said that several proposals on changing the electoral system had been put off indefinitely using the absence of "political census" as an excuse.

On the question of norms that guide the selection of the

Election Commissioner, he favoured a system where a collegium — that includes the Prime Minister, Supreme Court judges and others — selecting the right person for the high post.

Mr. Krishnamurthy recommended streamlining the system of disposing of election-related petitions. He said that petitions tend to drag on, sometimes even till the end of the term of a legislator, which makes the petition redundant. A time limit

of two years should be fixed to dispose of these cases on priority, he said.

While not favouring making voting compulsory, he argued for introducing a system of negative voting, where a person will have a "none of the above" option in the voting machine. A system could be evolved whereby a constituency in which more than 50 per cent of voters opt for "none of the above", a re-election will be conducted.

The current "first-past-

the-post" system of elections, said Mr. Krishnamurthy, has resulted in the proliferation of parties on caste and community lines. He said that there were several other options, including the proportional system, which would result in a healthier democracy where representation is based on percentage of votes.

Preventing criminals from contesting elections, putting breaks on election expenditure and giving voters the right to recall, he said, were much-needed changes in the electoral system. Mr. Krishnamurthy said that Indian democracy was "on trial" with an "obnoxious nexus" growing strong between political leaders, administration and businessmen.

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• 'Prevent criminals from contesting elections and give voters the right to recall'