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# Judges should not be hypersensitive: Justice Lokur

'It is high time judges sat down for introspection'

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NEW DELHI

Judges should not be "hypersensitive" about criticism, former Supreme Court judge Justice Madan B. Lokur has said.

It was high time judges sat down for an introspection on what had gone wrong and what was to be done, he said.

N. Ram, Director of The Hindu Group of Publications and former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, said there should be a "robust, strong, uninhibited and informed criticism of the functioning of the judiciary".

They were speaking at a webinar on "Keys to governance: independence of judiciary" organised by the India International Centre and the D.S. Borker Memorial Foundation on Thursday. Other speakers were senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy and Professor Tarunabh Khaitan.

The discussion was mod-



Justice Madan B. Lokur

erated by Suhas Borker.

The Supreme Court has been at the centre of a furious public debate on various aspects, including a Chief Justice of India becoming a Rajya Sabha member after retirement and the trial and punishment of civil rights lawyer Prashant Bhushan for allegedly scandalising the top court.

Mr. Ram pointed out that the "scandalising the court" provision in the contempt law should be struck down by the court itself. Parliament would not do it. The

provision was vague, arbitrary and had a chilling effect on free speech.

## 'Shocking case'

He said the case against Mr. Bhushan was "shocking" and one must push the line with well-informed criticism of the judiciary.

"It is important for people to have the opportunity and entitlement to criticise the judiciary, to call it out when judiciary is corrupt or arbitrary or allows itself to be submissive to external influences. Was the January 12 press conference of the judges a contempt? A lot of people applauded [the four judges, including Justice Lokur, who held the press conference]," Mr. Ram said.

Ms. Guruswamy said the contempt of court law should be scrapped.

Justice Lokur, however, said it was for each individual judge to decide whether or not to accept post-retirement assignments.