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## Special Benches to hear cases against legislators

### SC tells High Courts to start trials

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NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has asked the Chief Justices of High Courts to head Special Benches and immediately hear long-pending criminal cases against sitting and former legislators.

Over 4,400 criminal trials have been held up, some for decades, because the powerful MPs and MLAs had approached the High Courts and got an interim stay. Some date back nearly 40 years. Most are stuck at the stage of framing of criminal charges. There are over 2,500 criminal cases against sitting legislators alone.

In a significant order published on Thursday against

criminalisation of politics, a three judge Bench led by Justice N.V. Ramana requested the Chief Justices to take up these cases which have been in the backburner indefinitely just because the courts had granted an interim stay of trial at some point of time in the distant past.

The Supreme Court asked the Chief Justices to list such cases immediately before their own respective Special Benches and review if the stay on the criminal trial needs to continue at all.

The 18-page order asked the Chief Justices to come up with an action plan.

It ordered the case to be listed again in two weeks.