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One more special court to deal with criminal cases against lawmakers

162 cases pending against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs in the State

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Now, one more special court has been set up in the city to exclusively deal with criminal cases against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs. The first one was set up in 2018.

Following this, the High Court has posted district judge Shridhar Gopalakrishna Bhat as the judge of the newly set up 90th Addition City Civil and Sessions Court, which has been designated as the second special court to deal with criminal cases against lawmakers.

The State government set up the second special court based on the suggestions made by the Supreme Court and the High Court of Karnataka, which has taken up the issue of pendency before the special court set up in 2018 in a *suo motu* PIL petition initiated on the directions of

the apex court to monitor progress of trial in criminal cases against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs.

Screening prosecutors

Meanwhile, a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S. Vishwajith Shetty, while hearing the PIL initiated *suo motu*, has suggested to both the Central and State governments to set up a mechanism to screen the public prosecutors before assigning them with the task of conducting trial of cases against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs.

Earlier, the State government, in response to details sought by the court in an earlier hearing, said that it had appointed public prosecutors, who had a minimum 11 years of experience as prosecutors, to the spe-

cial court dealing with cases against lawmakers.

On the other hand, Senior Advocate Adiya Sondhi, *amicus curiae* appointed by the High Court, pointed out that the Income Tax Department had a screening committee headed by a senior officer to select prosecutors to defend its cases in courts and similar procedure could be followed while posting public prosecutors to the special courts dealing with cases against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs.

There are about 162 cases pending against lawmakers in the special court in Karnataka of which 36 have been booked by the State police and 136 by the agencies such as the Lokayukta, the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Enforcement Directorate and the Income Tax Department.