

## **SAY NO TO CRIMINAL POLITICIAN: S.C [Dated : 18-04-09]**

Indian Film actor Sanjay Dutt's plea to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections was on Tuesday rejected by the Supreme Court which refused to stay his conviction in connection with the 1993 Mumbai blasts case.

"We are not inclined to suspend his conviction," a Bench headed by Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan said. "It is not a fit case to grant stay of conviction," the Bench also comprising Justices P Sathasivam and R M Lodha said.

Samajwadi Party wanted to field Mr. Dutt from Lucknow Lok Sabha seat, earlier represented by A.B Vajpayee.

The actor had sought suspension of the conviction on issues similar to the ones considered by the apex court while staying the conviction of Sidhu. Dutt contended that his conduct during the trial should be considered for granting him relief like Sidhu. Dutt, 50, pleaded before the apex court to consider his case on grounds similar to that of Sidhu and to take into account that he was absolved of the serious offence under TADA apart from taking cognisance of the fact that there was not a single case registered against him before the Mumbai blasts. His counsel had contended that Dutt's conviction was based solely on the confessional statement which was opposed by the CBI.

The probe agency had claimed that the actor was held guilty also on the basis of recoveries, disclosures and corroborative evidences.

The Court said that Dutt was convicted for "serious offence" under the Arms Act by a Mumbai TADA Court. The Bench said that the actor's case could not be equated with that of BJP leader Navjot Singh Sidhu whose conviction and sentence in a road rage case was stayed by the apex court to enable him to contest the Amritsar by-elections in 2007.

The Bench said that Dutt was disqualified from contesting the elections under the Section 8 (3) of the Representation of People Act, which debars a person sentenced to two or more years of imprisonment, from standing for polls.

The judges said that the power of the court to suspend the conviction of a person to enable him to contest the elections has to be exercised rarely.

The Bollywood star, who was sentenced to six-year jail term on 31st July, 2007, had spent 18 months in jail during the pendency of the trial.

Dutt was convicted under the Arms Act for possession of an AK-56 rifle, a 9 mm pistol and grenades given by co-accused Abu Salem before the Mumbai blasts.

With this judgment the Apex court has also put breaks on the desire of some other well known politician-Criminals desiring to enter the Lok Sabha. Thus Surajbhan's and Sahabuddin's of politics have to wait.....