

JNU Teachers Delegation meets Prakash Javadekar on 6 April 2017.

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A delegation of JNU teachers met the Human Resource Development Minister, Prakash Javadekar and presented him the attached memorandum. The delegation comprised of Ajay Patnaik, Sonajharia Minz, S.N. Malakar, D.K. Lobiyal, Surajit Mazumdar, Vikas Rawal, Ravi Srivastava, Ayesha Kidwai, Pradeep Shinde, and Brahma Prakash. The delegation explained to the Minister the reason for JNU teachers' sustained opposition to the imposition of the UGC Regulations 2016, the manner in which it has been used as a pretext to cull admissions to the JNU research programmes, the conflict of law that it entails with the CEI Act, the deleterious effect it will have on JNU's pursuit for social justice – in short, all the issues the JNUTA has been raising since December 2016. We summarise the discussion below as fully as possible.

- The Minister listened to the comments and observations by members of the delegation with courtesy. **He was not cognisant of the CEI Act** (which was then shown to him), and consequently the conflict of law situation with it caused by a reduction of intake, and promised to study our memorandum to understand the issue. We also explained to him that even though the numbers of PhD students had risen because of the

54% increase in seats between 2008-11, the standards of research had not been allowed to fall, and that was evident in the various awards the university had been given. **The Minister responded by saying that the really outstanding work had been done in the Science Schools and not in social sciences and humanities, whose profligacy in supervising students had brought the university to this pass.** The delegation listed to him the achievements of the other Schools of the University, and also pointed out that a close to 70% cut in seats for the sciences was hardly a reward, especially as research students are integral to the functioning of labs, the conduct of experiments, etc.

- **The Minister stated that once appointments were made, admissions would take place.** He seemed to believe that JNU would be doing a round of admissions in December, but we informed him that these were admissions to only direct PhD and that to JNU's main research programme, the M.Phil./PhD integrated programme, admissions took place only in July. To which, the Minister responded by saying that he had not been really focusing on the M.Phil./PhD integrated programme in his responses to the issue of JNU admissions.
- **In response to our discussion of the impact these seat cuts will have on access of higher education to many from disadvantaged sections, the Minister responded by solely focusing on the delayed recruitment of reserved category vacancies and ignoring the substantive issues we addressed in terms of gender, caste, economic and regional backwardness and the role of deprivation points in addressing these asymmetries.** Our response that JNU teachers could not be held responsible for sudden changes in the regulations on this recruitment or the delay by university functionaries in holding selection committees wasn't addressed. Data from current

enrolments in School of Computer & System Sciences, in which close to 75% of the students pursuing research degrees in Computer Science are from SC/ST/OBC and disadvantaged backgrounds, also could not impress upon him that the seat cull was in itself a measure to deny social justice.

- **On the issue of caps, the Minister insisted that there were a significant number of JNU faculty (for whom he had lists by name) who had large numbers of students, a retired faculty member with 40, many with 20/25, and a large number with around 15 each.** The delegation asked him to provide him this list so that they could respond to these figures (which did not seem possible to us), and he assured us he would (but didn't). He also was not impressed with the explanation that JNU had been unable to comply with the UGC Regulations of 2009, because the CEI Act would not allow a reduction of intake, and **had clearly been conveyed the impression that JNU routinely flouts UGC Regulations.** Our explanations with regards to deregistered students and reassignment of supervisors did not hold much water, nor was he ready to accept that there was a logical inconsistency in making these statements and simultaneously providing the data that JNU had about 550 teachers and 4,300 research students. If the bulk of teachers had 10-15-20 enrolled students, the number should be much larger. The Minister also stated that it is mandatory for each university to display on their websites a list of PhD students, topics and supervisors assigned to them.
- The Minister also stated that since the UGC rules were mandatory in nature, they had to be followed to the letter. Internal statutory processes, and matters like statutory processes like holding a duly conducted Academic Council for deliberation were not essential.

According to him, internationally, there is a cap of 4 students per teacher, and the viva voce is always of a 100% weightage. When we countered by saying that this was far from the truth, the Minister said he would check up on this. Our argument that this adherence to a 100% viva voce was unfair and not even followed in government appointments was not accepted.

- **The Minister expressed great keenness for JNU to abide by the norms operating in the nation.** Our response was that the UGC Regulations 2016 were hardly the norm, as only a handful of universities had adopted and implemented them and provided him the list. We suggested to him that he was being misinformed, and he replied that he would verify this information. He also spoke of the sorry state of research in the country and informed us that he was ordering an audit of 11 universities to see their research performance. JNU was not one of them he said.
- **At the end of the meeting, the Minister expressed his happiness that we had come to meet him, promised to reply to our memorandum point by point within two weeks, and said that he will invite us for another meeting.** He stated that he has been also asking JNUSU to come and meet him but they haven't so far and continue to protest. He also was alarmed about the removal of the CCTV cameras by JNUSU. JNUTA members informed him that surveillance of the community was not something they could agree with.

For JNUTA, the one big take-away from this meeting was that the MHRD's involvement with affairs in JNU remain steady at a level of total engagement that we have seen since last year. Every happening in the university is being closely monitored and reported. Our

university administration is the source of much of the scurrilous ‘facts’ being reported as truths to the MHRD, and the JNUTA will make all efforts (as it has done in the past) to correct the false and misleading impression being conveyed about JNU. It requests all colleagues and students to work together to stop the vibrant research programmes of JNU and its dream of a socially just and gender equal university space from being tarnished.

PFA the memorandum that was submitted. [memorandum to HRD Minister](#)

Ayesha Kidwai

Pradeep Shinde

President

Secretary

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