

End Feb 2016

If Not Now, then When? If Not Us, then Who?

SFI

The SFI strongly condemns the bogus "council meeting" called by the JNUSU Joint Secretary of the ABVP and thoroughly rejects the "resolutions" passed in that bogus meeting. The SFI holds that the so-called council meeting was held in utter contravention of the JNUSU constitution and considers this recent attempt of the ABVP to dismember campus democracy further as nothing but a thoroughly shameful attempt to gain some cheap publicity. Completely devoid of popular support, the ABVP will continue to resort to such tactics to mislead the student community in the campus. The ABVP's commitment (or the lack of it) to the Indian constitution is clear when we consider that even out of the "resolutions" passed in the bogus council meeting, there is not a mention of regret or even a condemnation of the violent incidents which made attempts at Com. Kanhaiya's life in the Patiala House court. The SFI states it unequivocally that such brazen violation of the JNUSU constitution and the subversion of the democratic processes enshrined therein will not be tolerated by the progressive student community in JNU and the ABVP will face the wrath of the students in the coming days.

Release Com. Kanhaiya unconditionally, withdraw the Sedition Charges on all the students!

Unite against the 'Media trial' to specifically target Umar Khalid!

It has been more than a week since Com. Kanhaiya was picked up under the draconian Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code on charges of Sedition. Along with Com. Kanhaiya, comrades Anant, Ashutosh, Rama Naga, Anirban and Umar Khalid have been charged under the same "crime". Media has been specifically targeting and profiling Umar Khalid. The SFI holds this step draconian and believes that such attempts were not only undertaken only to terrorize the vibrant student movement in the campus. Ever since the BJP came to power at the center, it has wanted to target JNU for its left-leaning political atmosphere and the events of 9th of February, 2016 were used as a pretext to unleash the worst of state repression on the student activists in JNU.

The slapping of sedition charges defies all juridical logic because according to the Kedarnath vs State of Bihar case 1962, the Supreme Court considerably narrowed the ambit of Section 124A to only hold those matters that the intention or tendency to incite public violence as being punishable under this section. Mere sloganeering cannot be considered as a seditious activity as stated by many eminent lawyers and lawyer activists. Furthermore, historically the charges of sedition have always been used to target political opponents by the party in power with the most recent instance of which was the case involving folk singer Kovan who wrote and performed a song against AIADMK led Tamil Nadu Government's propensity to promote alcohol as against public welfare. Given these considerations, the SFI demands that the charges of sedition slapped on the six comrades be immediately revoked. Furthermore SFI firmly believes that there is no place for a law like section 124 A in a democracy like India.

Revoke the suspension of the student leaders! No enquiry until return of normalcy!

The recent right wing onslaught in the campus has been multi-faceted in its threats. On the one hand, the students of the university had to contend with the murderous mobs of RSS which keep visiting the campus gates everyday seeking a shutting down of the campus and the "ever vigilant" Delhi Police cracking down on students for their "crime" of "looking like JNU students" while on the other hand they had to contend with the administration which has completely surrendered itself to the BJP led Central Government. Ever since the incidents of 9th February, the administration has acted as loyal ally of the RSS in helping it crackdown on its own students. From the draconian blanket permission given to the Delhi Police to enter into the campus whenever they choose to crackdown on "anti-national" activities and the farcical enquiry committee that was constituted with three teachers owing their allegiance to the RSS to dissuading students from joining the protests

on Thursday, the administration has played its part to perfection in the script written for JNU by the RSS. This farcical committee has arbitrarily suspended eight student leaders of the university during the enquiry without any rhyme or reason.

The SFI demands that the suspension of the students concerned be immediately revoked, and a fresh enquiry committee comprising of members from the JNUSU and JNUTA, along with representatives from the big schools and GSCASH be constituted to look into the matter in a free and fair manner. Such an enquiry should also include the violence perpetrated by the ABVP goons on former minister Anand Sharma on the 13th of February, 2016 and the instance of hacking of the university library web site and the guilty in these cases should be brought to book.

Furthermore, the SFI would like to clearly state that any enquiry in this regard should only be carried forth only after return of normalcy to the campus. For this, the first step should be that the university revokes the blanket permission given to the Delhi police to crackdown on "anti-national" student activities in the manner in which they prefer.

The SFI appeals to the student community to rally behind the left and democratic sections in the ongoing struggle against the recent fascist siege on JNU and continue to strengthen the movement further. What is stake is not merely the future of JNU but also the future of the country.

PATRIOT TAX

How many crores must you spend to fly the flag before they call you an Indian?



A meeting between HRD minister Smriti Irani and the vice-chancellors of central universities had decided on Thursday that all centrally

funded varieties would fly the national flag 'prominently and proudly' on their campuses — all through the day and night

The flags should ideally be modelled on the Tricolour that flies at the centre of Delhi's Connaught Place, officials said.

Commander K V Singh of the Flag Foundation of India, which provided the Connaught Place flag, said the pole was made of high tension steel and cost between Rs 1.25 crore and Rs 1.26 crore. The flag, made of knitted polyester in Mumbai, cost Rs 45,000, he said.

The prices of steel in India have increased by about 30 per cent since the Connaught Place flag was installed. Taking Rs 1.25 crore as the lower limit — as the 15-inch mark, a pole of the same dimensions will now cost around Rs 1.5 crore.



The Connaught Place flag is illuminated at night by eight 100-watt lights, Singh said. Assuming the lights burn from 5pm to 6am, 10 hours, they will consume 8,000 kWh of electricity a day. Over a month, they consume 2,400 units.

With New Delhi's power tariff slabs among the lowest in the country — the electricity charges for the lights work out to Rs 17,000 a month, and Rs 214,400 (2.14 lakh) a year.

India has 40 central universities. The total one-time expenditure on the poles to mount the Tricolour at central universities will be around Rs 40 crore (Rs 1.2 crore x 30).

Assuming that the cost of the cloth and stitching have remained the same since 2014, a flag would cost Rs 30 lakh.

With New Delhi's power tariff slabs, mounting the lighting around the Connaught Place flag will cost Rs 30 lakh (Rs 214,400 x 140).

In all, replicating the Connaught Place Tricolour at the 40 central universities will cost at the least Rs 71.2 crore in the first year, leaving aside maintenance.

The cost will go up dramatically if the decision is expanded to other centrally funded higher education institutions that will admit students this year. Such institutions include 22 Indian Institutes of Technology, 20 Indian Institutes of Management, 30 National Institutes of Technology and eight Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research — all technical institutions.

The total cost of installing similar flags at all these centrally funded higher education institutions, including the 40 central universities, will come to Rs 107 crore in the first year.



WHAT Rs 185cr CAN DO OTHERWISE

- Fund full scholarships for all IIT students for two years — with some cash left in the kitty. (The student fees are Rs 95,000 a year at present, and the IITs admit just under 10,000 students each year)
- Pay almost the entire Rs 185 crore annual budget for skill based higher education, including community colleges, one of the Prime Minister's pet projects
- Pay three-fourths of the central government's entire higher education scholarship budget — Rs 243 crore last year
- Fund, with a few crores to spare, the central government's total annual budget of Rs 280 crore on information and communication technology at all universities and colleges
- Provide more than one and a half times the Rs 112 crore budget allocation last year for the Indira Gandhi National Open University, which boasts 4 million students at present and is India's largest engine of access to higher education.

BY ANUPAM KUMAR

Courtesy: The Telegraph, 20th February, 2016