

Printed from

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Govt backs JU VC, accuses governor of betraying CM

Dec 25, 2023, 08:17 AM IST

Kolkata: Hours after the Raj Bhavan's decision to remove Jadavpur University's officiating vice-chancellor Buddhadeb Sau, and the state government's decision to back the VC, state education minister Bratya Basu alleged that the governor was trying to wreck education in Bengal by defying apex court orders and denying students their degrees. The minister on Sunday referred to the governor's act as "Kalidas hacking the branch he sat on". The Raj Bhavan, on the other hand, alleged that the state education department was trying to undermine the university's autonomy.

With the state backing Sau and questioning the legality of the governor's termination letter, governor CV Ananda Bose on Sunday evening convened an "emergency meeting of all the officiating VCs." Interestingly, not all interim VCs attended the meeting. At the meeting it was decided to send "an emergency task force" to the UGC "for further discussions". Sources said that governor Bose spoke to the interim VCs urging for a "students-first" approach in running the universities, and reminding that the "Supreme Court has ordered (that) government has no role in the appointment or reappointment of VCs."

Bratya Basu on Sunday also accused the governor of "betraying and misleading" CM Mamata Banerjee on the VC appointment issue. These attacks and counter attacks appeared to have pushed this issue into a fresh bout of uncertainty. But this is in sharp contrast to the December 5 meeting between the CM and the governor, which had indicated that the deadlock would be resolved. On December 1, the Supreme Court asked attorney-general R Venkataramani to use his "good offices" for an amicable appointment of VCs.

After the meeting, the CM had told reporters that she had met the governor “following the SC directive” and “the way the conversation progressed (has led me to) believe there is no scope for confusion or controversy.” Basu on Sunday said the governor had assured the CM that he would give his consent to the Bill expanding the VC search committees.

Basu said, “According to the SC, none (interim VCs) can be terminated. The governor is appointing them, terminating them, he is investigating, and chasing them. This is contrary to the interests of students.” He said, “The manner in which he is trying to shove out the JU VC, he will do it to others (VCs) as well. I would urge them to resign immediately.”

TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh told reporters, “The governor is doing politics with this issue. To help the opposition, he is meddling in a very good academic environment in Bengal. We strongly criticize this role.”

Raj Bhavan said, “As per UGC regulations and the SC judgments, the government cannot interfere with the autonomy of the universities. When the governor took over... he had made all the then VCs resign because their appointments were not as per the directions of SC and regulations of UGC.”

(Inputs from Saibal Sen)