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Jadavpur University holds convocation, ignores chancellor CV Ananda Bose's call

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Picture by Sanat Kr Sinha


Jadavpur University (JU) went ahead with its convocation and held the ceremony on Tuesday, braving alleged last-minute attempts by the governor to slam the brakes on the proceedings.

A senior teacher at the university said governor C.V. Ananda Bose, the ex-officio chancellor of state-aided universities, called JU's "authorised" (interim) vice-chancellor's mobile phone thrice on Tuesday morning, once telling him to go on leave and later asking him not to hold the convocation.

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The VC could not answer the second call.

 On Monday, the chancellor wrote to VC Bhaskar Gupta that since he was only an "authorised" VC and the process of appointing a full-term VC was underway, the "new incumbent" should hold the convocation.





Of the three calls on Tuesday, the last call is said to have come at 9.15am, 45 minutes before the start of the convocation, a ceremony where graduating students are awarded degree certificates.

JU pro-vice-chancellor Amitava Datta said: “We held the convocation following the law.”

At the 67th annual convocation, degree certificates were awarded to 519 students in arts, 1,017 students in engineering and technology and 108 students in science.

This newspaper tried to call Bose on his mobile phone for a reaction to reports that he called the VC thrice on Tuesday and asked him not to hold the convocation. His number was switched off. He did not respond to text messages and emails either.

A JU official alleged that between December 19 and 24, the chancellor had made several attempts to derail the convocation.

On December 19, Bose had written to the VC telling him that the meeting of the university’s executive council held two days before to discuss the convocation was not called well in advance.

He wrote to the VC twice on December 23. In the morning he told Gupta that he should not proceed with the convocation because he was an “authorised” VC. At night he told the VC that the meeting of the university’s court scheduled for Tuesday morning to hold the convocation was not convened well in advance.

“On December 24 morning, the chancellor called our VC at 6am telling him to go on leave and that he (Bose) would preside over the convocation. He again called at 8.30am, when the VC was in the shower. He again called the VC at 9.15am. When the VC answered the call, Bose told him not to hold the convocation. The VC expressed his inability to cancel the convocation at the last moment,” said Manojit Mandal, a member of the court and the head of JU’s English department.

“Thousands of degree recipients had by then arrived on the campus to attend the convocation.”

Although the chancellor in his December 19 letter told the VC that a meeting of the executive council to discuss the convocation was not called well in advance,

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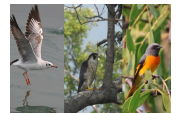
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The Telegraph accessed a document that shows that the VC had written to the chancellor on October 1 seeking his appointment to discuss the convocation, to be held on December 24.

The executive council meeting was held on December 17.

“I shall remain grateful to you if you please note the above-mentioned date for the convocation (December 24) and I shall be happy if I can have an appointment with you to discuss the convocation programme,” reads the VC’s letter to the chancellor on October 1.

“Had he responded, the university could have called the court and executive council meetings well in advance. The VC went to Raj Bhavan last Friday and explained to the chancellor that the preparations for the convocation had started from the executive council meeting on October 27. But the chancellor did not accept the explanation,” the official said.

Partha Pratim Roy, the secretary of JU’s teachers’ association, said: “If the chancellor had reservations about conducting the convocation by an authorised VC, he could have appointed a full-term VC by now.”

The chancellor has time till January 8 to appoint a full-term VC at JU from a panel of names prepared by a search committee. The names are in the order of preference set by chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

The file went to Raj Bhavan on November 21, said an education department official.

VC Gupta said: “It is sad that the chancellor could not come to the convocation. I have tried to do things honestly.”

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