

Press Release 20.03.2020

In response to the write-up published in the Indian Express, a national daily, on 17th March 2020, we, the members of Jamia Administrative Staff Association (JASA), condemn Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy's tendentious letter which he wrote to the Honourable President of India who happens to be the Visitor of Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University, New Delhi. Admissible and justifiable by no scrupulous standard, his letter brazenly questions the legitimacy of the appointment of Professor Najma Akhtar as the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia. Moreover, the letter also poses a serious challenge to the decision and discretion of the Honourable President of India. At the same time, it speaks volume about Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy's code of ethics – he himself was one of the members of the Search/Selection Committee which recommended the name of Professor Najma Akhtar for the appointment as the Vice Chancellor of JMI.

Right after assuming her office, Professor Najma Akhtar streamlined the administration, and brought transparency in everything, including admission process, appointment of new faculty members and promotion of the existing faculty members and other staff. She speeded up the recruitment process that resulted in the appointment of a large number of faculty members within a few months, leading to the improvement of academic life in the university. Under her leadership the university submitted proposals for the establishment of four departments in the newly emergent areas of foreign languages, hospital management and hospice studies, design and innovation and environmental sciences. She, along with her team, ably defended the proposals and got all of them approved by the UGC, with as many as 28 positions at different levels of Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor. Such a feat could not have been achieved without her inspiring vision and leadership. Within a short time, she has built enormous goodwill among the students and faculty members of the university who are looking forward to an era of unprecedented growth and expansion in all domains of knowledge.

It is not surprising that her success in running the university has caused anxiety among a very small group of disgruntled elements who finds the current administration striking at the roots of their vested interest. This group is trying to foment troubles in the campus through a concerted effort of mobilizing forces, within and outside the university, that are inimical to the interest and growth of the university. The administration is working in a fair and just manner, warding off interference from any sources. Financial and other irregularities are being dealt with a firm hand. This has disappointed people like Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy who wanted the administration to serve their vested interest and promote their parochial views and leanings. These forces are lobbying to destabilize the university. Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy is no longer a member after November 28, 2018.

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It goes without saying that 107 applications were received for the post of Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia. The Search / Selection Committee drew up a shortlist. Professor Najma Akhtar was one of 13 shortlisted candidates. After a rigorous session of personal interaction with the shortlisted candidates, the Search / Selection Committee further drew up a shortlist consisting of three names. The name of Professor Najma Akhtar figured among three candidates. The Search / Selection Committee forwarded these names to the President of India. By virtue of her excellent academic and administrative credentials Professor Najma Akhtar was appointed the Vice Chancellor of JMI. The Honourable President made a historic decision by appointing her as the first lady Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia.

It is pertinent to mention that Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy was himself a member of the Search Committee, constituted in 2018, for the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia. His name was recommended by the Executive Council of Jamia Millia Islamia for the process involved in Search / selection of the candidates for the post of Vice Chancellor. Therefore, the allegation of Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy of JNU that many meritorious candidates were ignored for some other considerations sounds pretty ridiculous because he himself was one of the members who recommended the name of Professor Najma Akhtar for the appointment as Vice Chancellor. It ill behoves someone of the stature of Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy, who was a member of the Search / Selection Committee to cast aspersions on Professor Najma Akhtar, the Vice Chancellor of JMI now on entirely spurious grounds.

By questioning the legitimacy of the appointment of Professor Najma Akhtar, as also by challenging the decision and discretion of the Honourable President of India, he has not only attempted to disregard the decision taken by himself but also the decision of other members of the Search Committee and the President of India. Moreover, being a representative of the Executive Council of Jamia Millia Islamia his letter is a barefaced betrayal of the trust put in him by the Executive Council of Jamia Millia Islamia.

We, the members of JASA, firmly demand that the Executive Council of JMI should convene a special meeting to condemn the blatantly prejudiced act of Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy and pass a resolution to file a defamation suit against him on behalf of Jamia Millia Islamia. The same may be forwarded to the Visitor for his kind perusal and necessary action from his Good Offices against Professor Ramakrishna Ramaswamy of Jawaharlal Nehru University.

(Nasim Ahmad)
General Secretary
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