



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

भौतिक विज्ञान संस्थान

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New Delhi

23 November 2020

The Honourable President of India
(Visitor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)
Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

Subject: Acts of malfeasance in the faculty recruitment process at the School of Physical Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Most Respected Rashtrapati Ji,

Sir, we bring to your kind attention the gross violation of ethics and procedures that have occurred during the recent round of recruitments related to the School of Physical Sciences (SPS), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. We all are the Professors (Physics) at SPS (JNU). Our School, like the rest of JNU, is well-reputed in both national and international circles for top-level research and teaching programs. However, all of this, built with more than thirty years of hard work, now run the risk of going down the path of destruction on account of the highly questionable processes employed during the recent round of selections. Our specific concerns on recent faculty recruitment are explained below:

During faculty recruitment each post requires a separate screening committee whose members are either experts in the area of specialization mentioned in the advertisement or have a broad enough command of the subject. They spend long hours going through the profile of each candidate and also read their research papers when necessary. This ensures that they can collectively and fairly judge whether the profile of a particular candidate matches the requirements mentioned in the advertisement and whether the candidate possesses the minimum qualifications needed to discharge the duties that faculty members have to perform (teaching at the post-graduate level and research guidance for doctoral candidates). These highly technical duties involved in shortlisting cannot be performed by non-experts and any act of altering the list of shortlisted candidates by any entity other than the duly constituted screening committee is illegitimate and is an act of malfeasance. Yet that is what happened repeatedly in these recruitments and the beneficiary in every case, in defiance of all laws of probability, was the person who was ultimately selected. These and other complaints are detailed below with respect to seven Physics positions in SPS:

1. Post 37 /RC60(Unreserved) Professor: Several strong candidates, including a CSIR-Bhatnagar prize winner, were shortlisted. But the selection committee

recommended a candidate who does not have even ten years of experience after obtaining the Ph.D. degree. JNU is a research university and even our Assistant Professors usually join with multiple years of Post – Ph.D. research experience. It is only logical to demand that a person aspiring to occupy the post of a Professor, which is a senior academic leadership position in the Level-14 pay band, should have at least 10 years of experience after receiving the Ph.D. Degree.

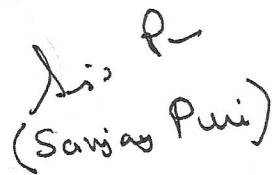
2. Post 47 /RC61 (OBC) Associate Professor: The screening committee of SPS shortlisted two candidates. A new name was added just a few days before the interview in spite of explicit refusal by the two members of the screening committee to do so because of only a marginal overlap of the candidate's actual research work with the required areas of specialization. This person, whose name was added by by-passing the original screening committee, got selected.
3. Post 48/RC61 (OBC) Associate Professor: The screening committee of the SPS did not shortlist the selected individual on three grounds; i) No teaching experience at the M.Sc. level, ii) No experience of independent guidance of Ph.D. students, and iii) marginal overlap with area specified in the advertisement. The IQAC of the university attempted several times to pressurize the screening committee into reversing its decision regarding this candidate but the committee refused. Yet this candidate was called for interview and selected.
4. Post 09/RC61 (Unreserved) Assistant Professor in Theoretical Condensed Matter Physics : At least ten strong candidates (with Ph.D.s from top institutes of the world) were present in the pool of shortlisted candidates. Yet a local teacher with insignificant research contribution was selected.
5. Post 10/RC59 (Unreserved) Assistant Professor: At least five strong candidates were there in the shortlisted pool. Yet one of the weakest candidates has been selected.
6. Post 54/RC61 (Unreserved) Associate Professor: The screening committee shortlisted two candidates (one of them was rejected later, possibly by the IQAC, on technical grounds). Attempts were made to exert pressure on one committee member to add the name of one particular candidate to this list -- along with a premonition that "None Found Suitable" will be the outcome if that particular name is not included. The committee member refused to yield and the predicted outcome followed in the Selection Committee meeting.
7. Post 08/RC59 (OBC) Assistant Professor: There were several strong candidates among the ones shortlisted by the screening committee. Yet flimsy excuses were invoked multiple times in an attempt to change this list. The screening committee did not oblige. The end result was: "None Found Suitable".

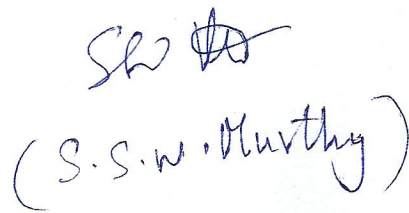
The processes and outcomes described above will have the consequence that competent individuals will not apply for faculty positions here in future. The message that performance on the job is not the determining factor for career advancement will thoroughly demoralize our younger colleagues and push them towards a state of premature unproductiveness. And, on a wider canvas, when facts such as those mentioned here reach the public domain it will dissuade brilliant young people from even considering a career in research and academics.

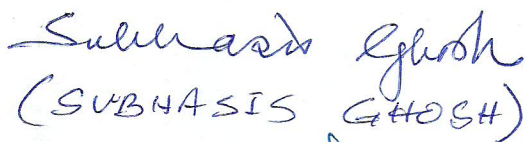
We request you to intervene in your capacity of Visitor of JNU. We pray that the appointments mentioned be kept in abeyance until all aspects of the conduct and outcome of the selection process (including whether the best available candidates were selected and whether the external subject experts on the Selection Committee were qualified to meaningfully judge quality of research in the relevant areas of specialization) are scrutinized by a committee of leading physicists and astrophysicists from institutions such as TIFR (Mumbai), IISc (Bengaluru) and IUCAA (Pune).

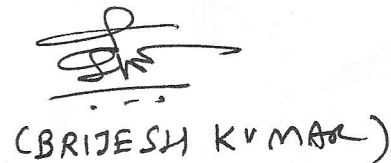
We shall remain grateful for your kind consideration on the matter. With best regards:

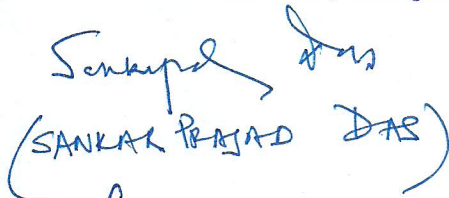
Yours sincerely,

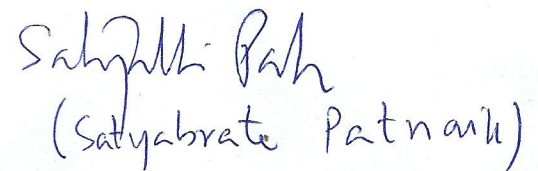

(Sanjay Puri)

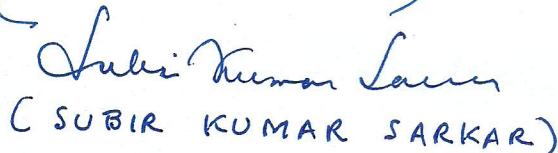

(S.S.W. Murthy)

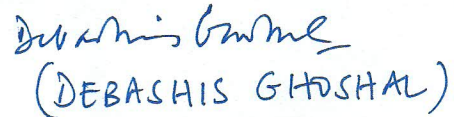

(SUBNASIS GHOSH)


(BRIJESH KUMAR)


(SANKAR PRASAD DAS)


(Satyabrata Pattnaik)


(SUBIR KUMAR SARKAR)


(DEBASHIS GHOSHAL)

CC: Chancellor, JNU

Vice-Chancellor, JNU