

12th July, 2019

Dear Students,

This is to inform all of you about some recent developments.

1. I received a call today (12th July) at 2.50 pm from a student (who did not identify herself but said she was from the Student Action Committee) asking me to come for a meeting that they were proposing with Dr C.N. Reddy today at 4 pm.

2. I replied to her that from the past three days I, together with faculty and admin staff, have been trying to enter the academic block requesting the protesting students to let us in so that the administration could take steps to resolve the issue of hostel accommodation and charges for the GoI-PMS students, the foremost issue listed in the Charter of demands submitted by the SAC on Monday, 8th July when I was taking my class.

3. However, every time we made an attempt to go in, some students have been consistently trying to block our entry.

4. On Wednesday, 10th July, the Convenor of SC/ST and EO cell, Dr. Murali Krishna and myself tried to go into the building saying that a meeting with the GoI-PMS students had been scheduled at 3 pm. The students who were present there told us that the meeting could be held there itself in full view of the other students, though this was a violation of the SC/ST norms of UGC regulations. All the individual details of the GoI-PMS students were taken so that a framework to implement supportive measures could be made.

5. On Thursday, 11th July we attempted to go in once again at around 12 noon since certain forms were required to be filled up by the GoI-PMS students. We were humiliated, verbally abused and asked to "Get out".

6. On Thursday afternoon at around 2 pm two GoI-PMS students approached us and requested us for a meeting with them, and sent a formal e-mail for the same. They asked me, Dr Murali and another faculty member to be present for the meeting. Accordingly, I requested Dr Sowjanya to be present, and immediately agreed to the meeting, contrary to the SAC's accusation that I have shirked my responsibility and ignored their requests. Despite the humiliation experienced earlier, we made yet another attempt precisely on the grounds of accountability and responsibility to students' concerns.

7. After three days of barring our entry, we were allowed to enter the building on the afternoon of 11th July. We had a three-hour meeting (till 8 pm) with the GoI-PMS students and according to them, they were satisfied with the proceedings of the meeting. We requested them to give us two working days' time, i.e. till 15th July (Monday) so that a formal response from the Institute could be given.

8. Based on the outcome of the meeting, which all the GoI-PMS students had said was positive, I sent out a mail to the faculty and the student body that we will resume classes from 12th July. And following on this mail, several students turned up to attend classes.

9. To our dismay, however, once again the entry of faculty and admin staff who had gathered to enter into the building was blocked. They were jeered at and heckled by a group of students who formed a human chain preventing our entry.

10. Despite the assent taken from the GoI-PMS students (all proceedings have been video graphed) about the proposed framework, I was taken aback to receive a mail at around 11 pm last night from a GoI-PMS student representative backtracking on their expression of satisfaction given earlier. The mail now stated that the GoI-PMS students wanted the response from the Institute in writing. Moreover, that this commitment in writing be submitted before 9 am today (12th July).

11. Given this background, when the (unidentified) student summoned me (as mentioned in Point 1) for the meeting with Dr. C.N.Reddy at 4 pm, giving me an hour's notice, I told her that I cannot appear when wanted, and leave when asked to get out. I had already left the premises for a meeting with the faculty after having been prevented from entering the academic block.

12. I would also like to inform the students, on behalf of all faculty and staff that contrary to the SAC's allegation of abdication of responsibility on the part of the administration, the following measures have been taken.

a. The demand of financial support for hostel facilities for the GoI-PMS students is being vigorously pursued by the administration and we are expecting a reply from the Institute authorities by Monday, 15th July.

b. Regarding the demand for reducing upfront payment of hostel charges for the GoI-PMS students, that had been initially foregrounded by the SAC in their charter presented on Monday, 8th July, I constituted a 5-member faculty committee consisting of Arjun Sengupta, Sowjanya T., Rajesh K.P., Ujithra P and Gayatri Nair. The constitution of this committee was communicated to the faculty via email and orally informed to the protesting students on 10th. This committee had prolonged and intensive discussion with the students for several hours on 9th July. It was decided that the Committee will meet with the service provider Dr. Reddy, along with a few student representatives. Further, Dr. Srinivas a senior faculty was asked to facilitate the meeting with Dr. Reddy who in turn, agreed for a meeting on 10th July afternoon.

This is the backdrop of my present "refusal" to be summoned when needed by the students, and asked to "get out" at their will.

TISS has had a long history of providing financial and other forms of aid to students, as its bedrock of values is based on respecting and ensuring the right to education for all. Despite severe funding constraints both from the government and private sources, it has been continuing to do so, albeit in a modest and limited manner.

I wish to assure you that the TISS administration continues its commitment to students and urge you to call off the protest and join hands in ensuring a conducive environment for an academically vibrant campus.

Thanks and sincere regards,

U.Vindhya

Deputy Director (Acting)

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