

Joint Press Statement: 30 June 2023

Teachers and Students of DU ask PM questions that demand urgent answers

Teachers and student organisations of Delhi University took to social media (FB, Twitter and Instagram) with the hashtags #MODIVISITSDU and #ALL_IS_NOT_WELL to demand urgent attention to burning questions that plague the University as well as the country.

Forced attendance through coercion, lure and advisories have preceded the Prime Minister's visit to Delhi University on the occasion of the valedictory function of the centenary celebrations of the University. The blatant use of administrative diktats to ensure a captive audience for the PM is nothing but an assault on the academic freedom of teachers, students and employees. Cancellation of the holiday for Eid, advisories not to wear black clothes, announcement of extra attendance for students who attend the function, threats couched as advisories to teachers that photographs of attendees would be uploaded on college and University websites reveal the mindset of the University administration whose only preoccupation seems to be to please their political masters. The centenary celebrations have already undermined the character and image of a University. Lectures and functions involving academics of repute were non-existent and sectarian non-academic personalities have been invited as speakers through the past year.

Shockingly, sectarian and majoritarian slogans of Jai Shri Ram and Bharat Mata ki Jai were allowed to be raised in the hall in the presence of the PM and University administration. The Vice-Chancellor himself was busy singing paens to the Prime Minister.

Teachers raised important issues such as: the implementation of the FYUP with no grants, the withdrawal of grants and forcing universities to take loans from HEFA, the NEP and its fallout of increasing costs due to commercialization of education, the manner in which hundreds of serving adhoc teachers have been displaced from their jobs, the CUET which has further marginalized those who already found it difficult to make it to higher education, Old Pension Scheme for all, grants for releasing arrears and pensions to teachers.

Larger questions plaguing the country which needs the government's immediate attention were also raised, prominently the situation in Manipur where the State and the Central government are mute spectators to the widespread violence causing loss of lives and property, the blatant protection of sexual offenders highlighted by the women wrestlers as well as the larger question of academic autonomy and freedom in institutions across the country.

The protest on social media whereby hundreds of teachers raised their voice demanding answers from the PM highlighted the fact that All is not well either in DU or in the country. The anti-teacher, anti-student policies of the government need to be

exposed and civil society must be made aware of the systematic dismantling of public funded education in the country.

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