

Scholar's allegations against Supervisor investigated promptly, as per law: KU

Srinagar, Apr 14: The University of Kashmir said on Friday that its Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) investigated the complaint filed by a PhD scholar against her then Supervisor promptly and as per the law, refuting that any "obstruction" was created in the matter.

Referring to a news report on some social media platforms which came into the notice of the University about the instant matter, a KU spokesperson said the University took all steps necessary to address the alleged complaint with promptness and to facilitate the complainant in completion of her PhD degree.

"Upon receiving the alleged complaint from the National Commission for Women, New Delhi, the University referred the matter to its Women's Empowerment and Grievance Committee without delay. Since the complaint involved allegations of sexual harassment, as well as a complaint about the delay in the complainant's PhD thesis submission, the matter was also referred to the University's Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)," the spokesperson said, adding that the ICC provided the complainant with a fair opportunity to record her statement freely and without fear, and the faculty member against whom the complaint was made was also provided with the same opportunity.

"To arrive at a just conclusion, the Committee also contacted the teaching and non-teaching staff at CCAS to record their observations. According to the complainant's recorded statement before the ICC, she alleged that she was harassed in 2016 while she was preparing her synopsis and had not yet registered for her PhD," the spokesperson said.

"However, she did not file a complaint with the authorities until December 2019 i.e. a gap of almost three years. As per the provisions of UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of Women Employees and Students in HEIs) Regulations, 2015, an aggrieved person/complainant can file a written complaint within three months of the incident. However despite this time lapse, the ICC went ahead with the investigating the complaint and subsequently submitted its report to the competent authority," the spokesperson said, adding that the ICC's report concluded, among other things, that the complaint was a result of "animosity resulting from non-compatibility between the scholar and the supervisor."

"In view of the non-compatibility, a Co-Supervisor was nominated by the University to Co-supervise the complainant's PhD and undertake all the process including evaluation/examination, academic clearance, formulation of panel of examiners, supervisor's report, viva-voce, and any other necessary formalities. The co-supervisor, from the Department of Sociology, was also authorised to assess and examine the thesis of the complainant and undertake all other formalities leading to the award of the PhD degree."

The PhD degree was subsequently awarded to the complainant on 12.12.2022.

"The University strongly denies any obstruction of action in the matter at hand. The University reiterates that it is fully committed to address any complaints related to sexual harassment and it recognises the importance of handling such complaints with utmost sensitivity. We are deeply committed to creating a fully secure academic institution/workplace for our students and women employees in all our campuses, and we will continue to ensure that complaints related to sexual harassment are handled in a timely, just and fair manner," the spokesperson said.

The allegation that the University delayed action in the matter is far from the truth and is strongly refuted. "The University reserves the right to take appropriate legal

action in case of furnishing wrong information since it involves the prestige and reputation of the institution,” the spokesperson said.