

The Student Bar Association of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore (*hereinafter* SBA) is releasing the following statement in relation to the pending appointment of the Vice-Chancellor for the institution, and also to air its grievances with the interim administration.

The previous Vice-Chancellor, Prof. (Dr.) R. Venkata Rao had stepped down from office on July 31, 2019, after leading the institution for more than 10 years. Earlier this year, a three member High-Level Committee consisting of Prof. (Dr.) M.P. Singh (Distinguished Jurist), Mr. K.K. Venugopal (Learned Attorney General for India) and Mr. Arvind Datar (Senior Advocate) had been set up by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, acting as the Chancellor of the University, to recommend a suitable candidate to succeed Dr. R. Venkata Rao. This High-Level Committee had shortlisted three candidates, *in a stated order of preference*, and found Prof. (Dr.) Sudhir Krishnaswamy to be the most suitable of the three.

Subsequently, in the 88<sup>th</sup> meeting of the NLSIU Executive Council (EC) held on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019 in Bangalore, this recommendation letter was tabled, as per the instructions of the Chancellor of the University, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and after due deliberations, the Executive Council resolved to constitute a Sub-Committee, under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Justice Sharad A. Bobde (Acting Chancellor of NLSIU) to interact with the shortlisted candidates and to recommend a name for the post of Vice-Chancellor.

The minutes of the Sub-Committee Meeting, held on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 in New Delhi, state as follows: "The Committee recommend (*sic*) the name of Prof. Sudhir Krishnaswamy to be the Vice-Chancellor. **Hence the Executive Council approves Prof. Sudhir Krishnaswamy as the Vice Chancellor.**"

**The student body of NLSIU wholeheartedly and enthusiastically welcomes the decision of the Sub-Committee chaired by Hon'ble Justice Bobde, and expresses its gratitude to the Executive Council (EC) for choosing a worthy candidate such as Prof. (Dr.) Sudhir Krishnaswamy. We believe that he is highly suited to lead NLSIU owing to his excellent academic credentials acquired at internationally renowned Universities, and also since he is a former student, he has a close understanding of the spirit and *ethos* of NLSIU.**

It has now been six weeks since Prof. (Dr.) R. Venkata Rao demitted office. The student body finds the undue delay in the appointment of the new VC, who has already been approved by the Executive Council, unfortunate and worrisome. The *ad-hoc* manner of functioning witnessed over the last six weeks does not bode well for any institution, much less for a prestigious institution such as NLSIU.

We are made to understand that the causes of the delay are the misleading and dilatory nature of communications from the present Registrar of NLSIU, Prof. (Dr.) O.V. Nandimath, who is the Ex-Officio Secretary to the Executive Council (EC). We have reasons to believe that he is needlessly obstructing the appointment of the next Vice-Chancellor. The requests made by the student body for making the communications between him and the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India public have gone unanswered. The student body has lost all faith in his ability to act in an impartial manner in this matter. The SBA at its General Body Meeting held on September 8, 2019, resolved to demand that the Registrar should recuse himself from this process owing to his obstructionist behavior and evident conflict of interest, **having been one of the 16 applicants for the position of Vice-Chancellor.** It is quite inappropriate that one of the applicants for the position has control over the administrative formalities and is patently abusing his existing position as Registrar of NLSIU to delay and possibly derail the appointment process. In these unexpected and extraordinary circumstances, it is only proper that the secretarial functions of the NLSIU Executive Council (EC) are performed by another Professor of the University who has no conflict of interest in this matter.

The present administration has also been systematically chipping away at the liberties granted to students of NLSIU which have evolved through the efforts of generations of students, faculty members and the previous Vice-Chancellors. The administration has been hostile to all requests made by the students, and has been taking away fundamental freedoms that students have had in residential campuses, like using the Academic Block for holding meetings and discussions after classes. Exorbitant costs have also been imposed for the use of University amenities such as conference venues for the organization of various events, which were previously made available without such rents. It is quite objectionable for a University to charge rent from its own institutionally-recognized student groups when they organise activities such as academic conferences, seminars and job interviews in order to boost the University's own image and prospects.

The SBA does not have confidence in the present interim administration and **pleads with the Executive Council to take note of the state of affairs and promptly appoint Prof. (Dr.) Sudhir Krishnaswamy as the Vice Chancellor, as has already been recommended.**