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Official apathy upsets Lokayukta



Santosh Hegde

Staff Reporter

'If this is the way you handle grievances, I pity those giving representations'

BANGALORE: Do officials read your representations and then take action? Not always. See how the following grievances were handled in a "routine" manner.

In September last year, Govindaiah, Assistant Registrar in the Lokayukta office, petitioned Governor Rameshwar Thakur during a Janata Darshan seeking promotion.

Mr. Govindaiah wrote that he was upright, working sincerely in the institution for more than five years, belonged to the Scheduled Castes and had been denied promotion. "I request you to transfer the Upa Lokayukta and appoint me to that post," his petitioned.

This was received by the Governor's Under-Secretary.

'Appropriate action'

The representation passed through six officials and finally was then sent to the Directorate of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (Public Grievances Cell). In response, the directorate wrote to the Registrar (Lokayukta): "This self-explanatory letter is being brought to your notice for appropriate action within 30 days."

The representation was made despite the fact that the Karnataka Lokayukta Act does not permit such a promotion. The Act states that a retired High Court judge alone should be appointed as Upa Lokayukta. "I am amazed to receive such a letter. I do not think your officials are unaware of the provisions of the Act," Lokayukta N. Santosh Hegde reportedly told outgoing Chief Secretary P.B. Mahishi on Wednesday.

Mr. Mahishi replied that the representation was forwarded to the Lokayukta as it came via the Governor's office. "You can ignore it and throw it into the dustbin."

Mr. Hegde retorted: "Why this can't be done by your officials? If this is the way you mechanically handle grievances, I really pity those giving representations."

Another misunderstanding

This exchange transpired when Mr. Mahishi was in a meeting with Mr. Hegde to clear another misunderstanding arising out of a letter written by his (Mr. Mahishi's) personal secretary. The letter sought action from the Lokayukta and Upa Lokayukta on a representation by the former Irrigation Minister, H.N. Nanje Gowda, and two advocates, S.P. Shankar and Subramanya Jois. They had asked the Chief Secretary to prevail upon the Lokayukta and Upa Lokayukta to abide by the provisions of the law to maintain confidentiality and not defame officials on basis of corrupt charges.

Mr. Mahishi explained to the Lokayukta that the representation was sent in a routine manner in "normal government language."

He said he did not read the representation personally as he received a large number of such letters every day. Mr. Mahishi said he did not intend to defame the Lokayukta by forwarding the representation.

But Mr. Hegde was not impressed. "These are attempts to denigrate the institution in the eyes of public. The bureaucracy and the police have been really affected by our action against corrupt officials."

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