

Now, a third panel to act against former VTU V-C

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A year after governor Vajubhai Vala communicated to the state government to initiate action against Dr H Maheshappa for alleged wrong-doings, the then vice-chancellor of Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU), Belagavi, the government has appointed retired high court judge Justice Ashok Hinchageri to frame charges. This is the third committee constituted to conduct inquiry.

When Hans Raj Bharadwaj was governor, he had constituted a committee headed by retired judge Justice Ajit Gunjal to look into the allegations against Maheshappa. However, Justice Gunjal did not continue with the inquiry. The second committee was headed by Justice Keshavanarayana. Interestingly, the expenses of all these committees were borne by VTU.

MAJOR ALLEGATIONS

Belagavi private contractors' association alleged that ₹4.5 crore was spent to renovate the V-C's residence in Belagavi

Five LED TVs worth ₹24 lakh and various bathroom fittings costing ₹40l were installed during the renovation. The letter also alleged that veneer panelling had cost ₹50.5 lakh

Irregularities in appointment of 168 non-teaching staff in violation of government orders.

Reduction of corpus fund from over ₹500 crore to insignificant levels

COMMITTEE'S FINDINGS

Wasteful expenditure of ₹3.06 crore on defunct e-Vidya online learning system

Unfruitful expenditure of ₹3.31 crore on water supply scheme

Loss of interest of ₹1.14 crore from fixed deposits

Outsourcing of exam management system

Irregularities in recruiting for 168 teaching posts

- Irregularities in re-evaluation

In August 2016, Governor Vala had communicated to the state government along with the report of the fact-finding committee headed by Justice Keshavanarayana, which confirmed allegations of irregularities at VTU during Maheshappa's tenure as VC. Following the report, the governor suspended Ma-

heshappa from the post and recommend appropriate action against him.

The government, which had not acted so far, issued an on October 16 appointing Justice Ashok Hinchageri as inquiry officer to frame article of charges based on the report submitted by the Justice Keshavanarayana

Committee. The order directs the committee to submit a report within three months and also says that report will be forwarded to the governor for further action. "Once we receive the report, we will send it to the governor. Based on his reply, we will take further action," said an official in the Department of Higher Education.



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INDIA SLIPS 21 SLOTS ON WEF GENDER GAP INDEX

Moves to 108th place on World Economic Forum rankings, mainly due to poor participation of women in economy and low wages

BEHIND CHINA AND BANGLADESH

India's rank (108) puts it behind its neighbours China (100) and Bangladesh (47) as the country has closed only 67% of its gender gap. WEF attributes much of India's decline to a widening of gender gaps in political empowerment as well as healthy life expectancy and basic literacy

BAD YEAR FOR GLOBAL GENDER PARITY

- This year, for the first time since WEF began measuring the gender gap, the global divide widened (68% of gap closed)
- At the current rate of progress, the global gender gap will take 100 years to bridge, compared to 83 last year
- In terms of workplace gender divide, it will take 217 years

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