

## **Central Information Commission**

### **Report of Inquiry at Aligarh Muslim University in case file number**

**[CIC/WB/C/2009/000124](#)**

Central Information Commission vide its order dated 16.3.09 in a complaint case under RTI Act directed the Registrar, Aligarh Muslim University to provide copies of the answer key referred to the printing press in order to ease the reference required to be made by complainant Ms. Asma Anjum. In compliance to the decision of the Commission Ms Anjum, the complainant received a letter dated 09.4.09 from Sri Wajid Ali; Assistant Controller (Admission) stating that the confidential press has informed that the manuscripts in reference are not available with the press. Ms. Anjum then filed a complaint of non compliance before this commission by a letter dated 16.4.09.

2. Commission examined the issue and directed Joint Registrar of this commission to enquire and submit a report to satisfy itself regarding the policy of the university with respect to the manuscripts of the question for various examining body exercising its authority under section 18 (2) of the RTI Act, 2005.

3. By a letter dated 21.5.09 undersigned informed the Controller of Examination and the Registrar, AMU about the direction of the commission relating to the constitution of enquiry and that undersigned will be visiting the university on 4-5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 to inquire into the matter. Intimation to this effect had also been sent to Ms. Anjum, the complainant.

4. Undersigned visited AMU on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2009 as indicated and attended the office of Professor Muhammad Irfan, Controller of Examination, AMU at 1000Hrs. Mrs Shema and Mr Mohammad Anjum, parents of the complainant were also present.

### **Submissions by the Controller of Examination**

Inquiry officer (IO) requested Prof. Mohammad Irfan to present before him a copy of the procedure adopted for printing of question papers for various examinations conducted by the university. Prof. Irfan submitted that no procedure whatsoever is available in records of the university in regard to this. However, there is precedence and tradition regarding printing of question papers and the same is followed since many years. IO requested the Controller to submit a written statement regarding what they follow. He submitted a written note on various steps followed by the university in conducting the Admission Test [**Annexure I**] which is as under:

- 1. A large number of subject experts of our university are requested to set 50 multiple choice questions for the Question Banks. For example, for MBBS/BDS Admission Test, Professors and senior Readers are requested to*

*set 50 questions each for Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology and to provide key to each question.*

- 2. Moderators, who are senior teachers of the University, are called for selecting 50 questions from the Question Banks for each subject. They also check and correct and correct the language and the key suggested by the question paper setters.*
- 3. The subject experts themselves detach the keys from the item sheet separating the key from the question in serial order and keep in a sealed cover and handed over to the Controller of Examination. Afterwards the questions are sent to the Controller of Examination. Afterwards the questions are sent to the Confidential Press for printing.*
- 4. Office of the Controller of Examination receives the properly sealed cartons containing the Question Booklets from the Confidential Press only two or three days before the Admission Test in the wee hours. These Question Booklets are kept in the Strong Room in the Office of the Controller of Examination and the Strong Room is sealed and 6-7 security personnel remain on duty round the clock around the Strong Room.*
- 5. On the day of the Admission Test the Strong Room is opened in the presence of the Controller of Examination and the Question Booklets are dispatched to the Test Centre one hour before the Test.*
- 6. The Moderators once again check the answer key on the basis of the questions printed in the Question Booklets and handover the keys to the Coordinator, who is appointed by the Vice Chancellor.*
- 7. After an Admission Test, the OMR Answer Sheets, a Question Booklet of each series and answer keys are handed over to the Coordinator. The Coordinator prepares the key on a blank OMR answer Sheet for each Series of the Question Booklets for processing the result.*
- 8. Merit list of the selected candidates is released after the approval of the Vice Chancellor.*

*Sd/-*

*Controller of Examination*

*AMU, Aligarh*

To illustrate, Controller of Examination submitted a blank sheet of ITEM SHEET [Annexure II]. In reply to a question of the IO as to whether the Printing Press is a Government owned or a private one, the Controller replied that it is a private press situated outside Aligarh. He further submitted that they have been only taking services of the same press since many years and pay quite a handsome amount to ensure the secrecy of the examination system. The IO then asked for a copy of the letter which Controller wrote to the owner of the printing press to know about the terms of agreement that university might have entered into for the job assigned to the press. The Controller of Examination stated that such correspondences are never made with the Confidential Press instead a telephonic inquiry is made regarding the cost of printing assignment in view of predefined quantum of work to the owner of the press. He then produced a file containing letters from the printing press indicating that for the year 2008-09 they will charge the university a particular amount. The same amount was approved by the Vice Chancellor of the university. No further records relating to this is available with the Controller. However, when the IO asked for the Minutes of Meeting which approved the examination scheme 2008-09, the Controller presented copies of Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Executive Council (No. 636) held on June 21, 2008 [Annexure III] which read "*the Vice Chancellor presented a report on the Admission Test and Admission-2008 in the house highlighting the exemplary manner in which the Admission Tests were conducted.*"

### **Analysis & Findings**

The mandatory disclosure of the University at manual 6 [Section 4 (1) (b) (vi)] reads "*Confidential matters pertaining to examinations and admissions, paper setting, evaluation of scripts and consequent procedures and documents related therewith, composition and proceedings of the selection committees and minutes of the university court/EC/AC until these are printed, will remain confidential and not available in public domain.....*".

[<http://www.amu.ac.in/shared/linkimages/33.pdf>]

It is really surprising as to what confidentiality is being observed in paper setting when there is indeed no recorded procedure about printing of question papers as a result of which only precedence is followed by the Controller of Examination. It is further established that the university has no robust mechanism to crosscheck the printed question booklets with the manuscript sent originally to the printing press. In fact the Controller of Examination and the university both never realized that the manuscripts are an important document having retaining value by the university not merely for the reasons that it is its intellectual property but also for resolving such an issue wherein suspicion about the examination system has been raised by a candidate, an important stakeholders of the entire educational system. The

Controller is quite confident that no irregularities could be observed as it never happened at AMU. This is indeed of becoming a prisoner of past. This belief is redundant in view of transparency era where a citizen is empowered with an instrument called Right to Information. We all have a great sanctity for the entire university examination system and admission to the university, but even if for a jiffy there is suspicion, the system should be able to establish and clarify.

In compliance to the direction of the commission dated 16.3.09, Prof. Muhammad Irfan, Controller of Examination wrote a letter vide XM/SO/899 dated 6.4.09 [**Annexure IV**] to the Confidential Press asking them to return the original manuscript of 200 question of BSM Admission Test 2008-09. To this they received a letter no. nil dated 08.04.09 from the Confidential Press informing them that they do not retain the manuscript unless they are so instructed at the beginning and since the AMU did not indicate anything in regard to this the manuscripts in question stands destroyed and the same was then forwarded by Sri Wajid Ali, Assistant Controller (admission) to the complainant [**Annexure V**]. In view of the analysis made above it is however clear though the manuscript has been destroyed by the confidential private press, university cannot be held accountable for such destruction by a private party such as confidential press since they were not in violation of any contract between them.

The Commission u/s 25 (5) of the RTI Act, 2005 may however like to recommend the Vice Chancellor, AMU the following:

- ✓ Retain the manuscript once the question booklets are published.
- ✓ Put in place a robust system of cross checking the answer keys once the examinations are over.
- ✓ Lay down procedures that are followed in paper setting and place it in public domain as mandated under appropriate section of RTI Act.
- ✓ Observance of greater due diligence while selecting a confidential press.

(Pankaj K P Shreyaskar)

Deputy Secretary & Joint Registrar

Inquiry Officer

15.6.2009