
2 days to retirement, govt steps in for whistleblower

Ritu Sarin Posted online: Monday , Apr 05, 2010 at 0334 hrs

New Delhi : In a significant win for whistleblowers, the Department of Personnel and Training stepped in recently to ensure revocation of the suspension of Abhijit Ghosh as General Manager of Central Bank of India.

While the order came just two days before Ghosh retired on March 31, it is a relief for the officer in particular and for other bureaucrats who face victimisation and harassment for blowing the whistle.

In August last year, The Indian Express had highlighted the case of Ghosh, who was suspended after he used the 2004 whistleblowers' resolution to complain against the then bank Chairman-cum-Managing Director. Instead of acting on his complaints, the bank placed him under suspension and three chargesheets were slapped against him, proceedings of which are in progress in the Delhi High Court.

For 18 months Ghosh fought his case. Having failed to get a reprieve from the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) — which is the administrative agency regulating the whistleblower resolution — he sent representations to the Banking Division of the Ministry of Finance and the DoPT.

On March 11, the Banking Division was the first to note that “prolonged suspension in this (Ghosh’s) case appears undesirable”. Six days later, in an unprecedented move, the DoPT shot off a letter to the CVC, citing Ghosh’s case as an example of how whistleblowers were being harassed and the entire purpose of the resolution being defeated.

“Prima facie, it appears that the then CMD, Central Bank of India, got to know about the identity of the whistleblower and unleashed severe departmental action upon him and he is still under suspension on frivolous charges,” the DoPT Joint Secretary wrote in the letter.

The DoPT also demanded that since the whole issue has “spilled over in the open”, actions taken on the complaints of corruption made by Ghosh should be intimated to the government.

“The entire whistleblower resolution was necessitated to prevent the disclosure of the identity of the complainant and possible victimisation thereof. The instant case needs to be looked into from the point of view of effectiveness of the procedures established so far,” it added.

A relieved Ghosh says he is happy that “while the CVC failed in administering justice, the government came to my rescue and ensured that I retired honorably”.
