

Govt remarks remind me of medieval age: Nair

New Delhi, January 28: Slamming Union minister V Narayanasamy for his remarks on scientists over the controversial Antrix-Devas deal issue, former ISRO chairman G Madhavan Nair on Friday said it reminded him of medieval times when Galileo was imprisoned for his scientific observations.

"Today I saw a news item, somebody (Narayanasamy) saying that we want to teach the scientists a lesson," Nair said in New Delhi. "It's a big blow to the scientific community."

"At least scientists are doing something. You also want them to shut-off? It's very strange," he said.

The minister of state in the PMO, while defending the action against Nair and three other scientists vis-a-vis scrapped Antrix-Devas deal, reportedly said on Thursday that the decision was taken to send a strong message to the scientific community that no wrongdoing would be tolerated.

Asked if he was shocked by Narayanasamy's statement, Nair said, "General scientific community should react, not me."

But he added, "Scientists have to be given freedom if technology has to grow. In medieval times, you have heard of Galileo put in prison by the King. If Indian scientists have also to be put like this, God save our scientific community in the country."

Galileo, 17th century Italian physicist and astronomer, was found guilty by the Church for his observations that the earth revolves around the sun, contradicting the age-old belief that the earth was centre of universe.

When asked if he thought India is returning to medieval times vis-a-vis treatment to scientists, Nair said one cannot decide from one action (against him and three others).

He, however, went to say that "this is perhaps beginning of the end or beginning of a new era".

"He (Narayanaswamy) is not in-charge of science and technology. There is a full-fledged Cabinet minister for science and technology. And what authority he (Narayanasamy) has got to say that he wants to teach a lesson to scientists?" Nair asked.

Nair said he would "immediately" file application under RTI to get a copy of the letter barring him and three other scientists from government jobs.

"I don't know what are the charges levelled on us based on which action has been taken. So, looking at that only ...one can decide what next to be done," he said.

"First of all, we don't care about the order. That's a different matter," Nair said, adding that since it affected "our prestige", he wants to take it to its logical conclusion.

"The government is so insensitive. I think many of the other scientists are also reacting (to the order). I hope the government would listen to all those things," the former ISRO chairman said.

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