

Bihar government asks Kalam to skip conference

Infighting in Bihar's ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has had an unexpected side effect with the state government disassociating itself from a science conference and requesting former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam not to attend it.

Official sources said here Saturday that it was an embarrassing situation for Kalam when he was requested not to visit Bihar to deliver the key-note address at the three-day Bihar Science Conference May 7 by a top official of the state government.

'None other than Chief Minister Nitish Kumar rushed a top official to New Delhi, who requested Kalam not to attend the conference. Kalam finally agreed,' official sources told IANS.

The officials attribute heat wave and examination season as the reasons for the government's withdrawal from the conference and kept mum over the request to Kalam not to attend it.

It was widely reported in the local media here that Nitish Kumar was busy resolving the infighting in the NDA and did not want to worry about a visit by the ex-president. The chief minister is now entirely focussed on avoiding any trouble for his government from dissidents in the Bharatiya Janata Party as well as his own party Janata Dal (United).

Nitish Kumar was also angry over the manner in which former president Kalam was invited without following protocol, the reports said. It was because of this that Ajay Kumar, then science and technology secretary, was shifted from the department.

Overall, the chief minister is apparently unhappy with Kalam's frequent visit to Bihar, as each visit requires elaborate security arrangements.

Official sources said that Finance Commissioner Alok Vardhan Chaturvedi, who was given the additional charge of science and technology last week, was specially sent to [New Delhi](#) to request Kalam not to visit the state and informed about decision of the government withdrawal from the conference.

Hundreds of people, particularly children, were disappointed that Kalam would not attend the conference. Eyebrows were raised over the sudden decision of the state government to withdraw from the conference.

'It was a fallout of troubles faced by the Nitish Kumar-led government following last month's ministry expansion and reshuffle,' said a leader considered close to him.

The leader said that the state government was well aware of the conference and Kalam was invited after getting clearance from the top level.

Kalam had already confirmed his participation to the conference organisers. 'A few days ago Kalam confirmed his participation to the conference, which is to be attended by about 300 scientists from prestigious institutes around the world,' said an organiser.

The conference is being held by Bihar Brains organisation, an NGO.

One of the organisers, Bibhuti Bikramaditya, said that the conference would go on as per schedule.

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