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JNU food fest order

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 19: Delhi High Court today directed Jawaharlal Nehru University authorities and police to ensure that no beef and pork festival is held on the varsity campus.

A group of students had scheduled such a food festival for September 28 some four months ago. Since then, there have been protests by right-wing groups and political parties. To prevent further flare-ups, JNU authorities had on Monday warned students against holding it.

“JNU and Delhi police are directed to ensure that no such beef and pork festival takes place on September 28 or in the future,” a bench of acting Chief Justice A.K. Sikri and Justice Rajiv Sahai Endlaw ruled today.

The judgment came in response to a plea by a registered society, Rashtriya Goraksha Sena, seeking to block the September 28 food fest.

Appearing for the Centre, additional solicitor-general Rajeew Mehra placed on record a circular issued by the JNU registrar. The circular warned students against the possession, consumption or cooking of beef on campus, citing the Delhi Agricultural Cattle Prevention Act, 1994, that prohibits cow slaughter.

The act provides for five years of imprisonment plus a fine of Rs 10,000 for storing or serving beef.

“While I believe that in a democracy everyone has the right to express his or her opinion and eat, wear or say what they want, it is imperative that they do not break the law of the land,” said former JNU students’ union president Sandeep Singh

“Instead of making statements and getting physical, students who want to hold the festival should demand changes in the law to accommodate their culture or eating habits.”

The Rashtriya Goraksha Sena plea had dubbed the JNU Foremention Committee for Beef and Pork Festival “a group of Maoists and anti-national forces” and claimed it was disrupting the “peace and educational atmosphere of the institution” under the pretext of right to eat.

The plea also urged the court to direct “authorities not to permit serving of beef or pork or anything which will hurt the religious sentiments of the people in general”.

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