Union Minister MJ Akbar, who has been accused by his former colleagues of sexual misconduct, on Sunday released his statement in response to the allegations. The senior journalist-turned-minister, who returned to India today morning, denied all accusations and said he will take legal action against the accusers.

Full text of MJ Akbar’s statement

The allegations of misconduct made against me are false and fabricated, spiced up by innuendo and malice. I could not reply earlier as I was on an official tour abroad.

Accusation without evidence has become a viral fever among some sections. Whatever be the case, now that I have returned, my lawyers will look into these wild and baseless allegations in order to decide our future course of legal action.

My response is:

Ms Priya Ramani began this campaign a year ago with a magazine article. She did not, however, name me as she knew it was an incorrect story. When asked recently why she had not named me, she replied, in a Tweet: “Never named him because he didn’t ‘do’ anything.”

If I didn’t do anything, where and what is the story? There is no story. This was admitted at the very inception. But a sea of innuendo, speculation and abusive diatribe has been built around something that never happened. Some are total, unsubstantiated hearsay; others confirm, on the record, that I didn’t do anything. Let me note examples. Shutapa Paul states, “The man never laid a hand on me.”

Shuma Raha says, “I must clarify, however, that he didn’t actually ‘do’ anything”. One woman, Anju Bharti, went to the absurd extent of claiming I was partying in a swimming pool. I do not know how to swim.

Another accusation was made repeatedly by Ms Ghazala Wahab, in an effort to damage my reputation. She claimed that she had been molested in office, 21 years ago. This is 16 years before I entered public life, and when I was in media.

The only office where I worked with her was that of The Asian Age. A part of the editorial team then worked out of a small hall. At the time concerned, I had a very tiny cubicle, patched together by plywood and glass. Others had tables and chairs two feet away. It is utterly bizarre to believe that anything could have happened in that tiny space, and, moreover, that no one else in the vicinity would come to know, in the midst of a working day. These allegations are false, motivated and baseless.

Ms Wahab states that she complained to Ms Veenu Sandal, who wrote features for the paper. Ms Sandal has described Ms Wahab’s version as nonsense, in an interview to the Indian Express. Ms Sandal has also said that she has never heard, in 20 years, anybody accusing me of any such thing.

It is pertinent to remember that both Ms Ramani and Ms Wahab kept working with me even after these alleged incidents; this clearly establishes that they had no apprehension and discomfort. The reason why they remained silent for decades is very apparent: as Ms Ramani has herself stated, I never did anything.

This is the reason why no one went to the authorities for so long, because I had done nothing.

Why has this storm risen a few months before a general election? Is there an agenda? You be the judge.

These false, baseless and wild allegations have caused irreparable damage to my reputation and goodwill.

Lies do not have legs, but they do contain poison, which can be whipped into a frenzy. This is deeply distressing. As indicated above, I will be taking appropriate legal action.