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Explained: The events leading to the resignation of Anju Seth as director of IIM-Calcutta

Anju Seth, Director of the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta, has quit her post a year before her term ends. A look at the events that led up to her resignation.

Written by [Ritika Chopra](#), Edited by Explained Desk | New Delhi |

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IIM-Calcutta Director Anju Seth

Almost a month after Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta Board of Governors (BoG) **clipped her powers**, Anju Seth, the first woman director of the institute, **has quit the post** a year before her term ends. *The Indian Express* explains the events that led up to her resignation.

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Why has Anju Seth quit as IIM-Calcutta director?

Seth submitted her resignation to the BoG late Sunday night, citing a “breakdown of confidence” between her and board chairman Shrikrishna Kulkarni.

The confrontation with the board is a recurring theme in Seth’s resignation letter, in which she accused Kulkarni of running a smear campaign against her, and of “maliciously and denigrating” her publicly with the support of the board.

She also wrote that he had assumed executive powers to “diminish the role of the Director and of the faculty by persistent intervention, although the post of the Chairman is a non-executive part-time role”.

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How had the chairman infringed on Seth's role as director?

In her resignation letter, the director hasn't mentioned any examples of how she felt the chairman was assuming an executive role. However, in an earlier letter **to the Education Ministry**, Seth had told the government that she was sidelined in the drafting of new regulations under the amended **IIM Act**. As the director of the institute, she said, her inputs were either not sought or even at times ignored.



The Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (File Photo)

Has the chairman, or the board responded to the director's allegations?

Kulkarni hasn't responded to Seth's accusations either publicly or in response to questions shared by *The Indian Express*.

However, when she approached the Education Ministry against the chairman, the board, in turn, had accused her of improper conduct. It passed a resolution against her, in which it said it was "grossly improper" on Seth's part to approach the government, and "thereby seeking to cause undue confusion between the Ministry and the Board through misrepresentations of facts".

The board also alleged several deficiencies on her part as the institute director, including the inability to prioritise work, meet timelines of action, and foster an "inclusive and professional environment with faculty".

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How did things come to such a pass?

The confrontation between Seth and the Board stems from another showdown — between the director and the faculty. In December last year, over 75 per cent of the IIM-Calcutta faculty had, in a letter to the Ministry of Education, alleged that Seth had centralised powers and usurped their administrative and decision-making roles.

Seth had dismissed the allegations as the work of “a small group of individuals”, upset with her efforts to foster a culture of transparency and accountability. In her resignation letter, she wrote that she had discovered “numerous legacy issues” during her tenure, and her attempt at fixing these problems came in “direct conflict with vested interests that resisted disruption of their legacy comfort”.

The confrontation between Seth and the faculty snowballed into a showdown between her and the Board after Kulkarni started meeting teachers directly to discuss the institute’s matters, especially the problems they flagged to the Education Ministry.

Seth mentions this in her letter, in which she accused Kulkarni of not taking tough action to address the root cause of the governance problems at the institute. “Instead, you have chosen an appeasement policy with some faculty, rolling back reform attempts, and attempting to downplay irregularities uncovered during my tenure,” she wrote in the letter.

Eventually, the director approached the government against the chairman, accusing him of assuming her role. In turn, the board passed a resolution against her, and initiated [an early search for her successor](#). Almost three weeks later, Seth resigned.

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Why is Anju Seth's exit from IIM making news?

A showdown this serious between a director and the board is without a precedent in IIMs, and the resolution against Seth is the first since the new IIM Act came into force.

What is the big picture on the turmoil in IIM-Calcutta?

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Many in the IIM community see the ongoing turmoil at IIM-Calcutta as one stemming from the dramatic shift in power dynamics ushered in with the new IIM Act. This is the first time that the IIM autonomy is set in stone, and the government has relinquished complete control, at least on paper. Its implementation will obviously face hiccups as the government settles into a passive role and the board assumes greater power in the functioning of the IIMs.



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