

IIM teachers rue 'decline'

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Joka: As many as 60 of 76 teachers of IIM Calcutta have written to the Union education ministry, raising "certain grave concerns" about the "decline in academic and research environment" and "systematic undermining" of the academic council, the principal academic body.

The letter written on behalf of IIM Calcutta Faculty Association had been addressed to Union education secretary Amit Khare as the institute's director and board of governors have allegedly "ignored or brushed aside" the concerns raised by the teachers.

The teachers wrote: "We have reasons to believe that the board is also contemplating imposition of restrictions on the freedom of expression of faculty...." "Left with no internal recourse, we are compelled to reach out to the min-

istry and seek your urgent intervention to help arrest the decline of IIM Calcutta."

Metro had reported on June 24 that 51 teachers had signed and sent a letter to the board pointing out what they termed "deficiencies in the current administration" and had spoken about "absence of plurality of views on the campus".

"Since the situation has worsened since June, the letter has been written to the ministry on December 2," a teacher told **Metro** on Saturday.

Elaborating the issue of "decline in academic environment" the letter says, the student-teacher ratio at IIM Calcutta has worsened significantly over the past two years and the country's oldest IIM today has 20-30 full-time faculty members, fewer than IIM Ahmedabad (IIM-A) or IIM Bangalore (IIM-B). IIM-C has more students in its two-year

MBA programme, compared to both IIM-A and IIM-B, said a teacher.

Reflecting on the poor research environment, the letter mentions, the research funding has come down and post-doctoral research fellowships have been discontinued. "Internal funding for research projects and international conferences ... are discouraged to augment the annual surplus," says the letter.

The signatories to the letter have referred to the systematic undermining of the academic council to explain what they have called "violations of due processes and 'established norms'".

According to the teachers, the academic council (AC) — recognised in the IIM Act as one of the three authorities (the board and the director, being the other two) — has been "systematically undermined in terms of both its powers and function".

Director Anju Seth was squarely blamed for undermining the role of the academic council since taking charge.

"The director, as the chairperson of the academic council, sets the agenda, dictates decisions and controls the minutes, disregarding the views of the majority of the members of the council. Consequently, minutes take longer to be ratified and do not truly reflect the discussion or decisions in the academic council," the letter says.

Seth took over as IIM Calcutta's first woman director in 2018. Repeated calls to her phone went unanswered. She did not respond to text messages till late Saturday evening.

Ashok Banerjee, a former dean and a teacher at IIM-C, who is a signatory to the letter said: "We hope that the ministry will look into the grave concerns...."