

IIM-C turf war: Director goes to govt against Chairman

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A NEW front has opened in the ongoing turf war at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, with Director Anju Seth, this time, writing to the government against the institute's Chairman.

Seth, *The Indian Express* has learnt, has written to the Ministry of Education alleging that the Board of Governors, led by Chairman Shrikrishna Kulkarni, is infringing on her executive powers.

The letter comes less than two months after over 75% of the IIM-Calcutta faculty lodged a similar complaint with the ministry against Seth. The teachers had alleged that the Director had centralised powers in her hands and usurped their administration- and decision-making roles.

Seth and Chairman Kulkarni did not respond to calls, SMS, and an email left by this newspaper.

Seth has, among other things, told the government that she was sidelined in drafting new regulations under the amended IIM Act. These regulations are to help oversee and guide IIM administration under the new law. Incidentally, this too is similar to what the faculty had alleged earlier—that they were not consulted by the Board or Seth in the formulation and adoption of the new regulations.

Seth's letter against the institute chairman, just as the faculty letter against her, is highly unusual for an IIM.

Among the issues flagged by the teachers earlier was faculty

shortage. Sources said only one new faculty member had been hired in the last two years despite the institute losing over 10 teachers on account of resignation, superannuation and voluntary retirement. Some of the exits, the teachers alleged, were due to "harassment".

The faculty also claimed that the disregard of their views on the new regulations was unlike what was done by peer institutes such as IIM-A and IIM-B. The Academic Council, the faculty said, was given only five days to submit suggestions on the draft regulations, and their feedback on centralisation of powers in the Board and Director was not considered by the Board while finalising the regulations.

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. "We are pained by the baseless stories instigated by this small group to sully the institute's reputation built over decades. Despite the challenges we have confronted, including those posed by the Covid crisis, we are now operating at even greater effectiveness and efficiency, with devotion to the success of our talented students. Having converted challenges into opportunities to strengthen our resilience, we are excited to march into the future with integrity and commitment to the pledge of 'IIM First', blessed by the good wishes and support of valued members of our faculty and extended community," Seth had told *The Indian Express* in an email.