

# IIM-Calcutta Director Anju Seth Resigns

Cites interference by chairman, unchecked conflict of interest and breach of government rules

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**Mumbai:** Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta director Anju Seth has submitted her resignation to the institute's board and the Prime Minister's Office, alleging interference by its chairman, unchecked conflict of interest, and open breach of government guidelines in matters of procurement and personnel.

Seth, the first female director of the country's oldest national-level B-school, has also accused the chairman of starting a process, with the support of the board, to malign and denigrate her publicly.

IIM-C chairman Shrikrishna G Kulkarni did not respond to ET's email seeking comment till the time of going to press on Monday.

A few board members, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told ET that the development reflected bad gover-

## Another Chapter

**Anju Seth is the first** female director of the country's oldest national-level B-school

**Has** submitted her resignation to institute's board & PMO

**Has cited interference by the chairman and unchecked conflict of interest**

**Says that unlike other** IIMs & renowned universities worldwide, no code of conduct exists at IIM Calcutta

**Has accused board of** drawing up various resolutions alleging vague wrongdoings & condemning her without any evidence



nance by the IIM-C board. "We are aware that the chairman has been interfering in matters that are strictly the jurisdiction of a director. No other chairpersons at any of the good IIMs have done that. Probably, IIM-C is really not ready for autonomy," one of them said.

"I firmly believe that IIM-C can truly take its place among the best management/business schools in the world to achieve its mission of excellence in learning and

research," Seth told ET after her resignation. "However, to achieve this, a balance of governance needs urgently to take place between the board, the director, the faculty and the (education) ministry. Greater maturity of experience will undoubtedly bring this about." The development comes amid a turf war over the role of the chairman and the director at the institute. The chairman had reportedly excluded the director from several committees, including

one tasked with fundraising. Its board had reportedly divested Seth of her powers to make appointments and initiate disciplinary action.

In December, IIM-C faculty had sent a letter to Amit Khare, secretary at the Ministry of Education (MoE), against her style of functioning that it said was "arbitrary, discriminatory and having a very narrow vision".

ET reported this month that the Board of Governors of IIM-C had hired a legal firm to look into what it called issues arising from the conflict of interest involving the CEO/director, and to interpret the IIM Act rules in connection with the autonomy of the institute.

Seth, who was a Pamplin Professor of Management at Virginia Tech in the US before she joined IIM-C in November 2018, said in an earlier interview to ET that being a woman and an "outsider", it was easy to be a target for charges of autocratic or arbitrary behaviour.

In her resignation letter addressed to the board chairman and the PMO, Seth said: "I am deeply anguished at not being able to fulfil this mandate and help turn around IIM-C to a world-class institution with a distinctive Indian heritage. This situation has arisen because of a breakdown in confidence escalating over the past four months between me as director and CEO, and you as the chairperson of the board. To the best of my ability, I have been conducting my responsibilities as director and CEO in the best long-run interests of the institute with a focus on urgent reforms, forward-looking decisions and the interests of all stakeholders."

"The board chose to draw up various resolutions alleging vague wrongdoings and condemning me without any evidence thereof, while denying me the opportunity to defend my actions (which were in the best interests of the Institute)," the letter stated.