

HC critical of IIM-A's behaviour with ex-faculty member

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Ahmedabad: The Gujarat high court on Tuesday seemed upset with the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) and termed its dealings with a former associate professor "pathetic", as the faculty member left the institute by putting in his papers he was issued a show-cause notice for alleged financial irregularities. The petition was filed by the former faculty member, Manish Aggarwal, who was on probation until last year. The institute issued him a show-cause notice on March 26, 2020, for alleged financial irregularities, stating that he was claiming more than actual expenditure incurred during foreign tours.

Aggarwal resigned the very next day and refused to participate in the inquiry, saying it was not maintainable at all. The institute accepted the resignation on certain conditions, including the outcome of the inquiry.

After the inquiry, Aggarwal was found guilty of charge of financial irregularities and IIM-A slapped a penalty on him, 400% of the alleged loss he caused to the institute. Aggarwal moved the HC challenging the inquiry as well as the penalty, claiming that he was not heard on this matter and a decision was wrongly taken against him, which is not sustainable.

During the hearing, Justice Bhargav Karia asked why IIM-A was in such a hurry that it decided to conduct the inquiry during corona times. "What was so urgent? Could you not give him time? Why such a draconian action or removal?...You could have waited till the situation was normalised. What was the hurry?" the judge asked.

The court went ahead and said, "You can give him a full-fledged hearing. An institute of the level of IIM behaving in such a manner is pathetic. The future of business of India is in your hands, and you are behaving in such a manner... This is not done."

Appearing for IIM-A, advocate Nandish Chudgar explained to the court that Aggarwal had immediately resigned as soon as the show-cause notice was issued and the inquiry was to be instituted. To the court's queries, the lawyer submitted that Aggarwal was asked thrice in April 2020 to appear before the inquiry committee online and argue his case, but he chose not to appear and instead claimed that the inquiry itself was not maintainable.

The HC has posted a further hearing on this issue on Wednesday, when the institute's lawyer will submit replies to certain queries by the court.