

## PROTESTERS BLOCK FOOD DELIVERY PERSONS' ENTRY INTO CAMPUS

# Axed contractor staff shut IIM hostel's mess

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Joka: Students at IIM Calcutta alleged that after the students' council decided to bring in a new mess contractor for a hostel, workers of the former contractor forcibly shut down the mess of all hostels on the campus on Tuesday.

The students said the workers protested at the institute's main gate and prevented food delivery personnel from entering the campus.

The new contractor, who was hired on November 4, is in charge of New Hostel, but the students alleged that

mess services were shut at Old Hostel, White Hostel and Lake View Hostel, too, on Tuesday.

An employee of the contractor, who has not been allowed to start work, said they would cancel the contract because of threats.

Calls and messages to IIM director Uttam Sarkar went unanswered. Dean Manish Thakur said: "This is an hour of crisis and we stand by our students. We are trying to resolve the situation as soon as possible."

A student at New Hostel said they had been complaining about poor food since June.

Over 170 students stay



Protesting workers outside IIM Calcutta on Tuesday

at the hostel. Each paid Rs 6,000 a month for three meals a day.

"Despite repeated warnings to the contractor, no action was taken," said a student.

The students' council sent an email to the IIM authorities on Monday detailing what led them to change

the contractor.

A council member said the students at New Hostel had refused to pay for the mess service because of the "substandard" food. "After the contractor came to know this, he shut down the mess on September 1," the member said.

In the email, the council wrote: "For two months, the 170 students residing at New Hostel had been forced to eat at other messes.... After a lot of thought, we silently brought in a new contractor. As soon as the union workers caught a whiff of it, almost 40 of them gathered in front of the hostel premises threatening the new contractor."

An employee of the previous contractor denied that the food they served was bad.

On Tuesday, the students ordered breakfast through food delivery apps, but the entry of the delivery personnel was blocked from 6am to 1pm.

"After a lot of persuasion in the presence of police, the personnel were let in. But the workers have threatened to keep the messes shut till their demands are met," said a student.

An officer of Haridevpur police station said they went to the gate of the campus on their own to keep watch on the situation.