

**EDUCATION MINISTRY ORDERS INQUIRY**

# Cloud over degree, IIM Rohtak director faces financial probe

**RITIKA CHOPRA**

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

MONTHS AFTER the Union Government amended the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Act, granting it greater say in the functioning of the 20 pre-

mier business schools, the Education Ministry has launched an inquiry into the accounts of IIM-Rohtak to investigate allegations of financial irregularities, including a complaint that the institute "illegally" transferred Rs 2 crore to its director's account as

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

## ● Cloud over degree, IIM Rohtak director faces probe

"variable pay."

The *Indian Express* has learned that the ministry, a little less than two months ago, tasked its Principal Chief Controller of Accounts with investigating allegations of funds embezzlement by the institute's director, Dheeraj Sharma, in the form of "variable pay" and charging of "exorbitant fees from students," among other concerns. The PPCA was asked to submit a "detailed report" on the same.

The *Indian Express* called and sent a text message to Sharma for his comment on the government inquiry but he was unavailable.

Significantly, Sharma is already under government scrutiny for allegedly misrepresenting his educational qualifications to secure his initial term as IIM Rohtak's director in 2017. The job required a first-class Bachelor's degree, but he had obtained a second division at the undergraduate level.

The government acknowledged this discrepancy in the Punjab and Haryana High Court in March 2022, only after he completed his first term. Despite objections from the ministry representative on the institute's Board of Governors (BoG) due to revelations about his academic credentials, Sharma was reappointed for a



**IIM-Rohtak  
Director  
Dheeraj  
Sharma.** *File*

second term by the Board as the institute's head in February 2022.

According to the latest complaint that the Ministry has taken cognizance of, the institute is accused of transferring Rs 2 crore to Sharma's account as "variable pay" for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20 without approval of the Board. The *Indian Express* has learned that the institute has defended this money transfer on the ground that it was approved by the BOG in its 45th meeting held on December 11, 2020 on account of meeting "performance parameters."

Apart from this, the inquiry will look into at least 10 complaints that the government has received from students on the institute refusing to refund their fee deposit despite withdrawal of their admission from its five-year integrated programme in management and PhD programmes. It will also probe whether the institute charged "exorbitant fee" from students despite having adequate reserves and thereby defeating the "not-for-profit mo-

tive" of education laid down by law.

The inquiry comes months after the Education Ministry, in a surprising move, introduced an amendment Bill for the IIM Act during the monsoon session last year in July, significantly diluting the autonomy granted to the 20 IIMs five years ago with the enactment of the IIM Act in 2018.

The changes were made to entrust the management accountability of the IIMs with the President, who will be the Visitor to the premier B-schools with powers to audit their functioning and remove or appoint directors. Earlier, these powers were vested in the IIM Board with the Union government having little say in the matter.

Now, the President, in her capacity as Visitor, has the power to appoint the Chairperson to the Board of Governors and the director of the institute and nominate an individual to the search-cum-selection committee for the position of Director, giving the government a say in these crucial appointments.

Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had justified the changes saying the government has no intention to take away the academic accountability from the institute but the Bill will ensure the accountability of its management.