

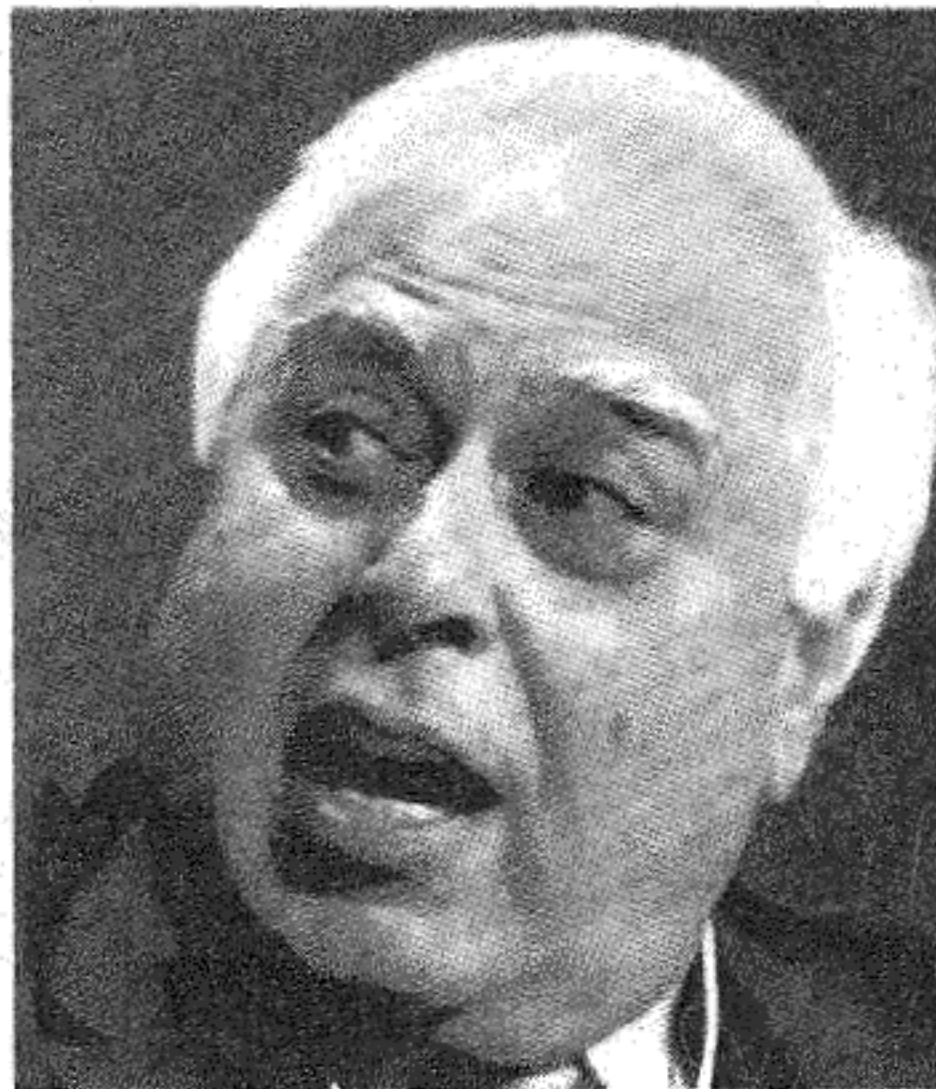
# Autonomy to IIM-A at variance with NCHER norms: Experts

**Jyotsna Bhatnagar**

**Ahmedabad, July 18:** HRD minister Kapil Sibal's latest attempt to empower the Indian Institute of Management at Ahmedabad is at complete variance with the legislation for the formation of a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) that is currently pending clearance, say observers. Sibal has approved long-pending amendments to the institute's memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the government, allowing IIM-A to choose its own director and raise resources

Highly-placed sources in the HRD ministry who spoke on condition of anonymity said the move flies in the face of the proposed NCHER. "One of the key functions of this proposed body, as and when it comes into existence, would be to prepare a national registry of people eligible for appointment to the position of directors/vice-chancellors of all major national institutions of higher learning. That being the case, what would the IIM-A board do with the autonomy provided to it by the HRD ministry to select its own director?" said a source.

Moreover, though the HRD ministry has been actively involved in the process of selecting directors for IIM-A over the past two rounds, first in the case of Bakul Dholakia and then in the case of current incumbent Sameer Barua, it is the IIM-A board that has been the nodal body for selection of a director ever since the inception of the institute. Interestingly, though the government had increasingly been taking an interest in the selection of directors for the institute, the original MoU had not been tinkered with. In the case of the selection of the present director, the HRD min-



**Kapil Sibal, HRD minister**

**ANOTHER MOVE OF THE HRD MINISTRY THAT IS NOT GOING DOWN WELL IS ITS NOD TO THE AMENDMENT FOR GRANTING THE IIM-A FINANCIAL AUTONOMY AS WELL INCLUDING THE SELLING OF SEATS ON THE IIM-A BOARD TO THE HIGHEST BIDDING CORPORATE DONOR TOO IS NOT BEING VIEWED FAVOURABLY BY INSIDERS AT IIM-A**

istry had even advertised the post in leading national dailies, leading to consternation in some quarters over the "complete infringement of the institute's autonomy".

"As far as the selection procedure is concerned, the amendments to the MoU do not change anything on the ground materially," said a senior IIM-A faculty member. "As usual, it was the chairman of the IIM-A board who was sending a list of three names in order of preference and the government was granting its approval in accordance with this."

With the latest amendment to the MoU, however, the informal scope the government had of influencing the choice of director is likely to go completely. "If this is done, then it will be in complete variance with the role envisaged of the NCHER, which is supposed to prepare a panel of names for future appointments to all premier institutes of higher education through a collegium of academicians of distinction," the faculty member said.

Another move of the HRD ministry that is not going down well is its nod to the amendment for granting the IIM-A financial autonomy as well including the selling of seats on the IIM-A board to the highest bidding corporate donor too is not being viewed favourably by insiders at IIM-A. A faculty member observed that the move to auction seats would actually be tantamount to backdoor privatisation of the institute over a period of time. "That's because the board is accountable to the IIM-A Society. Thus far, it was the government which was monitoring the institute's finances while the Society had been comatose. If the board now becomes answerable only to the Society as envisaged in the amended MoU, it would, over a period, lead to an increase in control of corporates," he said.