**Court restrains Leela Samson**

**DC, Chennai**

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The Madras high court on Tuesday restrained Ms Leela Samson for a week from functioning as the director of Kalakshetra Foundation here.

Justice N. Paul Vasanthakumar passed the interim order on a petition filed by a group of 16 Kalakshetra employees including assistant professor of music Sai Sankar against reappointing Ms Samson as director. The case has been posted for hearing next week.

Represented by senior counsel K.M. Vijayan, the petitioners told the court that it was “highly improper” for the Union culture ministry to have allowed Ms Samson to withdraw her resignation after accepting it and even getting her to demit office (on April 30) following controversy over her continuance despite attaining superannuating age of 60 more than a year ago. Besides, the Comptroller and Auditor General had found serious financial irregularities in her administration, they pointed out.

Interestingly, Kalakshetra chairman Gopalkrishna Gandhi in his counter affidavit said theministry did not consult him before permitting Ms Samson to return as director nor sent him a copy of the ‘reappointment’ proceedings. “As such, I have no comments to offer on the said reappointment/withdrawal of resignation of Leela Samson as director of Kalakshetra foundation”, said Gandhi, a former Governor of West Bengal.

It may be recalled that Ms Samson was first appointed as Kalakshetra director in February 2005. Some former Kalakshetra employees filed a PIL challenging her continuance even after attaining retirement age of 60 in May 2011. With the controversy deepening, she sent her resignation to the ministry on April 30 this year and it was immediately accepted.

But strangely, the ministry sent her communication on June 29 saying that her request for withdrawing resignation had been accepted. Ms Samson took charge the same evening.