

Boss of PwC's India business wants seat at firm's top table

- ◆ Krishan cites nation's growing clout
- ◆ Approval seen as 'highly unlikely'

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PwC's India boss is lobbying for a seat on the Big Four firm's global executive committee alongside his counterpart in China, arguing that the fast growth of its business and the rising importance of the Indian economy merit a position at the \$53bn network's top table.

Sanjeev Krishan, chair of PwC India, has in recent months petitioned senior figures for him to be added to the firm's influential network leadership team, people familiar with the matter told the Financial Times.

The move has caused ructions within the accounting and consulting firm,

'To put [India on the] team, you would also have to put Canada, France and the Middle East'

with one senior figure familiar with the discussions saying that while the issue has not yet risen to the level of "tensions", it is regarded by some within the network as a "problem".

One partner said Krishan had been "pushing very hard" for a seat while another, who has held global and national leadership roles at the firm, said it was "highly unlikely" that the Indian business would be given a place on the committee.

Like the rest of the Big Four — EY, Deloitte and KPMG — PwC is run as a network of partnerships linked through a global entity. The firm's network leadership team sets overall strategy and standards for its 151-country network.

The leadership team consists of the firm's global chair, the leaders of its US, UK, and Asia-Pacific/China businesses, as well as its Europe boss, who holds a seat that can be rotated at the behest of PwC's global board.

"The size and composition of PwC's network leadership team is determined by the regulations that govern the network and by PwC's global governance board," said PwC International. "There are no current plans to add any additional members to the network leadership team."

The Indian firm's lobbying underlines the sometimes contentious political manoeuvring that occurs in the Big Four's global networks and marks an early test for Mohamed Kande, the incoming global chair.

It comes as PwC's China business faces a crisis over its audits of collapsed property developer Evergrande. One of the senior partners said: "India is very punchy at the moment because of what's going on with China."

Demand for professional services in India has increased rapidly on the back of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic drive and the professionalisation of the country's economy.

The Indian firm was the fastest-growing of PwC's 21 largest businesses in the network last year, with revenues jumping by nearly a quarter.

That performance propped up PwC's overall Asia-Pacific revenue growth, which at 7 per cent was slower than the other major regions, dragged down by China. The Indian firm expects to surpass \$1bn in sales for the first time this financial year.

However, the Indian business remains small compared with some of those in other regions.

"If you look at their numbers, the domestic [Indian business] is growing great, but from a very low base," said the partner who has held global and national leadership roles. "To put them on the network leadership team, you would also have to put Canada, France and the Middle East. Suddenly the network leadership team has 10 countries. That would not be workable."