CBI - Kolkata Police Stand-Off

What is the issue?

- West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee went on an indefinite sit-in in front of a Police station in Kolkata, in a stand-off between CBI and Kolkata Police.
- With Supreme Court's intervention, the stand-off has come to a halt but only leaving way for other institutional concerns.

What is the case about?

- The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was tasked to question Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar.
- It is aimed at locating crucial evidence in connection with the Saradha scam and Rose Valley scam in West Bengal.
- The evidence was collected by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that was formed by the West Bengal government in 2013 to investigate the chit fund cases.
- Mr. Kumar was the 'functional head' of the Special Investigation Team (SIT).
- But the case was transferred to the CBI in 2014 on the Supreme Court's orders.
- CBI sources claimed that the evidence held the key to connecting the scams to influential persons in West Bengal and outside.
- CBI sources claimed they have been trying to question Kumar for the last few years, but there was no response.

What is the recent tussle?

- The CBI officials tried to enter Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar's residence.
- [With a notable track record in service, especially in crushing Maoists in Jangalmahal, Mr.Kumar had earned credits from Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.[
- Ms. Mamata soon remarked that the central government was using the CBI as a political tool.
- She eventually staged a dhrana, reportedly, to save democracy and federal forces.
- Moreover, the CBI officers were illegally confined in a police station for hours.

- She ended her nearly 48-hour dharna soon after the Supreme Court order came in regards with the issue.

What has the Supreme Court ruled now?

- The Supreme Court ordered Kolkata Police Commissioner Rajeev Kumar to make himself available to the CBI for questioning.
- The court, however, barred the CBI from taking any coercive steps, including arrest, against Mr. Kumar.
- The court went further and scheduled the meeting between Mr. Kumar and the CBI at 'neutral' Shillong in Meghalaya and not anywhere in West Bengal.
- The court, however, issued notice on a contempt petition filed by the CBI against the Chief Secretary and the DGP of the state and Mr. Kumar, asking them to file their replies.
- The Supreme Court's is certainly an even-handed intervention in the stand-off between the Central and West Bengal governments.
- Nevertheless, the whole episode has raised concerns on the jurisdictions and power of the CBI and the state police.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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