CBI Ordered to probe ‘Abuse of Office’

Why in news?

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The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) under a new chief will, on the basis of a Supreme Court order, investigate and, probably prosecute, its former director for abusing his authority while in office.

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What the Supreme Court says?

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- A three-judge Bench led by Justices Madan B. Lokur, Kurian Joseph and A.K. Sikri asked CBI chief Alok Verma, who took office only last week, to form a Special Investigation Team (SIT), which he will personally head, to probe the role played by **former CBI director Ranjit Sinha** to “scuttle enquiries, investigations and prosecutions being carried out by the CBI in coal block allocation and other important cases.”
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- The court directed the SIT under Mr. Verma to take the assistance of two CBI officers nominated by him and with due intimation to the court.
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- The CBI director was directed to take the Chief Vigilance Commissioner into confidence in respect of the investigations and also seek the legal aid of senior advocate R.S. Cheema, who is the Special Public Prosecutor in the **coal block allocation cases**.
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- The court was of the opinion that it was necessary to enquire whether any one or more such meetings that Mr. Sinha had with the accused persons had any impact on the investigations and subsequent charge sheets or closure reports filed by the CBI.
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Logbook entries:

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- The order came on the basis of revelations made by **NGO Common Cause**, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan.
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- It had accessed the visitors' log maintained at Mr. Sinha's official residence when he headed the agency.
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- The log showed frequent and unofficial meetings held by Mr. Sinha at home with the accused in the multi-crore coal scam cases in the absence of investigating officers.
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What is Coal scam?

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- The coal scam, or what's popularly called the coalgate, first came to light when India's audit watchdog, The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, raised the issue of inadequacies in the allocation of coal blocks from 2004 onwards. It created a political storm, as the loss to the exchequer was initially pegged at over Rs. 10 lakh crore. The final report scaled it down to Rs. 1.86 lakh crore.
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- CAG's criticism was that though the government had decided to allot coal blocks through a system of competitive bidding, what it ended up following was a method that was opaque and subjective.
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- Further, its point was, there was no legal impediment in introducing a more transparent process.
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- The Supreme Court ruled that coal blocks allocated by the government between 1993 and 2010 were illegal.
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Source: The Hindu

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