# SC Verdict on Delhi Assembly's Committee Powers

## Why in news?

The Supreme Court, in a recent verdict, upheld the authority of a committee of the Delhi Assembly to summon a senior official of Facebook.

## What is the case about?

- Facebook India vice-president Ajit Mohan was repeatedly summoned by Delhi Assembly's Committee on Peace and Harmony.
- This was in relations to misinformation on the Delhi riots of 2020.
- Facebook argued before the Supreme Court that this was a case of overreach.
- Because, Delhi's law and order came under the central government.
- This was also the position taken by the central government.
- It argued that the Delhi Assembly had no jurisdiction in this matter.
- Facebook also pointed out that it was governed by the IT Act of Parliament.
- So, it said no State government has a role with it.

## What has the Court said?

- The Supreme Court upheld the Committee's summon.
- While doing so, the Court observed the following:
    a. The Assembly does not only perform the function of legislating.
    b. There are many other aspects of governance which can form part of the essential functions of the Legislative Assembly and consequently the committee.
- It implies that the "inquisitorial" and "recommendatory" powers of a House could be used for better governance.
- But the Court also cautioned the committee from "transgressing into any fields reserved for the Union Government".
- Besides, the Court noted that misinformation on social media could ultimately affect the governance of States.
- It refused the view that social media intermediaries were merely a platform for exchange of ideas without performing any significant role themselves.

## What is the significance of the verdict?

- The verdict comes amid a long phase of discordance over legislative turf

between the central government and the Delhi government.

- It also comes at a time when social media intermediaries are legally fighting some aspects of the new IT rules that govern them.
- So, the verdict increases the responsibility of the social media intermediaries towards the many legislatures and not just the Union.
- The verdict now opens the gates for scrutiny of social media platforms by other States as well.
- It is a nuanced recognition of the extent of powers of State Assemblies in matters regulated by an Act of Parliament.

**Source: The Hindu**

