VVIP Chopper Case

Why in news?

A court in the UAE is examining whether Christian Michel, a UK citizen living in Dubai, who was involved in Agusta Westland Chopper Deal, can be extradited to India.

What is Agusta Westland scam?

- In 1999, the Indian Air Force floated a proposal for acquisition of 12 VVIP helicopters to ferry top government functionaries.
- In 2010, the deal was granted to Agusta Westland for over Rs.3,600 crore.
- This was followed by allegations that technical specifications had been tweaked just to favor Agusta Westland.
- One such specification is lowering of the service ceiling of the helicopter from 6,000 m to 4,500 m that helped AgustaWestland qualify and win the bid, for which bribes were allegedly paid.

Who were involved in the scam?

- In this big defence kickback controversy, the role of then PM Manmohan Singh, former Defence Minister AK Antony, UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and former IAF chief SP Tyagi was put to question.
- The CBI filed an FIR on March 14, 2013, after a preliminary inquiry.
- The FIR named former IAF chief S P Tyagi and 12 other individuals as accused.
- It included members of the Tyagi family and three middlemen — Michel, Carlo Gerosa and Guido Haschke.
- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) too began investigations under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

Who is Christian Michel?

- Michel was one among the alleged middlemen who brokered the deal.
- It is also claimed that he paid bribes to officials and politicians to swing the contract in favour of Agusta Westland.
- Agusta Westland is the British arm of Italian firm Finmeccanica.
- Michel was the one dealing with Ministry of Defense, bureaucrats and politicians.

Source: Indian Express

