

Why is the CBI raiding itself?



India's premier investigation agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is under a top-level internal war as it is currently raiding itself as it is investigating against one of its own senior officers - Special Director Rakesh Asthana allegedly involved in bribery and corruption. But why is the CBI raiding itself? Keep on reading to understand the entire script that is more complicated than any movie.

To begin with, let's first understand who is who. The centre of the entire CBI furore is CBI's number 2 officer ? Special Director Rakesh Asthana who was appointed by the Modi government into CBI in 2017. Asthana is a high-cadre Gujarat police officer who was the chief investigator of 2002 Godhra Sabarmati Express burning train investigation. However, the appointment of Asthana was opposed by a non-government organisation called Common Cause citing that his name appeared in bribe record dairies maintained by Sterling Biotech. Furthermore, Asthana is also connected with bribery case of meat exporter Moin Qureshi and is in charge of a Special Investigation Team.

So who is Moin Qureshi? Well, he used to be the owner of a small slaughterhouse in UP but eventually became the biggest meat exporter in India and is involved in a number of businesses as well as political connections. It has been said that the UPA government actually protected Qureshi from income tax raids, so a special investigation was launched in 2014 that concluded with Rs 200 crore worth of money laundering cases. Another businessman from Hyderabad named Satish Sana was also connected to Qureshi and he stated on October 4th that Asthana has been pushing the Qureshi case to get money and that Sana himself has already paid Rs 2.95 crore to public servants, including Asthana.

While all these cases were unfolding, Asthana accused his boss and CBI chief Alok Sharma of being "softer" towards Lalu Prasad Yadav's Railway issuance cases and impeding in a number of other corruption cases. The entire Sana case was headed by Verma and was intended to test Asthana, who has been under the scanner since his name appeared in Sterling Biotech dairies in 2011. Also, the CBI press office made an unusual and unlikely move of calling Asthana's allegations against Verma "malicious" and "frivolous" and defended one of its officers - this has actually led to questions.

So in simpler words, the CBI chief might be using India's topmost investigation wing to investigate into the affairs of its own number 2 officer by carrying out raids in its own headquarters; and also using the CBI public relations wing to defend himself. While on the other hand, the government, which likely wants to side Asthana - the number 2 who is believed to be close to Modi cannot simply dismiss Sharma and his accusations on Asthana - because CBI is an independent body and does not have any political interference. Perhaps, the CBI is in "terminal decline that's at war with itself" which can disdain the image of the current government, but it might also be the beginning of the war against corruption in India.