# CBI Arrest in Narada Bribery Case

## Why in news?

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested four ministers, Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee, TMC MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata Mayor Sovan Chattopadhyay in the Narada bribery case.

## What is the Narada case?

- The Narada sting operation was conducted by Narada news founder Mathew Samuel for over two years in West Bengal.
- It was conducted in 2014 for the news magazine Tehelka. Samuel is the former managing editor of Tehelka.
- It was published on a private news website Narada News months before the 2016 West Bengal Assembly elections.
- As part of the operation, Samuel formed a fictitious company named Impex Consultancy Solutions.
- He then approached several TMC ministers, MPs and leaders, asking them for favours in return for money.
- It was a 52-hour footage photographed by Samuel and his colleague Angel Abraham.
- In it, then TMC (Trinamool Congress) MPs and state ministers were seen accepting alleged bribes in the form of wads of cash.
- This was allegedly in exchange for extending unofficial favours for Impex Consultancy Solutions, which was floated by Samuel himself.
- Samuel claimed that K. D. Singh, TMC Rajya Sabha MP and majority owner of Tehelka, knew and funded the entire operation.
- Singh, however, refuted his involvement with any aspect of the sting.

## Who all were involved?

- The MPs include Mukul Roy, Sougata Roy, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Prasun Bannerjee, Suvendu Adhikari, Aparupa Poddar and Sultan Ahmad (he died in 2017).

- The state ministers were Madan Mitra, Subrata Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim and Iqbal Ahmed.
- IPS HMS Mirza (now suspended) was also seen taking cash from Samuel.
- TMC leader Shanku Deb Panda was also seen asking for shares in Samuel's fictitious company in exchange of promised favours.
- Of the above, Mukul Roy, Suvendu Adhikari, Sovan Chatterjee and Panda are with the BJP now.

## What was the State response?

- The state government initiated its own probe.
- It booked Samuel under multiple sections of the IPC 469 (forgery to harm reputation), 500 (defamation), 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) etc.
- In August 2016, the Calcutta High Court stayed the state probe for ad infimum.
- The court observed that the police cannot run a concurrent investigation along with a court-monitored probe.
- In March 2017, the Calcutta High Court ordered that a preliminary probe will be conducted by the CBI.
- The court also directed the CBI to register an FIR against those who were involved in the case, if required.
- Soon, the state initiated disciplinary proceedings against HMS Mirza.

## What are the various proceedings underway?

- In April 2017, the CBI filed a First Information Report against 12 Trinamool leaders for "criminal conspiracy".
- The CBI also subsequently summoned all of the leaders involved to assist in the investigation.
- All of them were booked under Section 120 B of IPC (criminal conspiracy), Section 13 (2), 13 (1D) and Section 7 of Prevention of Corruption Act.
- The Enforcement Directorate is also running a parallel investigation.
- It has lodged a case about misappropriation of public funds under Anti-Corruption-Act.
- It has also issued multiple summons to the accused and Samuel, himself.
- Since the sting operation involved Members of Parliament, a Lok Sabha ethics committee was also set up.
- This was to initiate a probe to determine if the persons committed a breach of privilege of the house concerned.
- The committee sat only once after the incident.

## What is the recent move?

- Recently, West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, on a request by the CBI, sanctioned the prosecution of Subrata Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim, Madan Mitra and Sovan Chatterjee.
- [Governor is the competent authority to accord sanction in terms of law as he happens to be the appointing authority for such ministers in terms of Article 164 of the Constitution.]
- The CBI arrest thus came days after the Governor gave his consent to the CBI for filing a chargesheet against the four accused and sanctioned prosecution against them.

**Source: The Indian Express**