

MAHARASHTRA RESTORES CONSENT TO CBI TO CONDUCT PROBES

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The Maharashtra government led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday reversed the previous Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government's decision of withdrawing the general consent to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to probe cases in the State.

According to sources, Mr. Shinde cleared the proposal of the Home Department, headed by Mr. Fadnavis, to reverse the decision. The move that clears the decks for the CBI to initiate action in cases filed in the State comes as a major blow to the leaders of the three parties that constitute the MVA coalition: the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction, the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress.

In October 2020, the MVA government had withdrawn the general consent to the CBI on the ground that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Central government was 'misusing' the Central agencies to settle political scores.

The friction between the Centre and the State government intensified after the 2019 Assembly election when Mr. Thackeray severed ties with the BJP and joined hands with the ideologically opposed NCP and the Congress.

Uddhav camp loyalist and Lok Sabha MP Arvind Sawant said the move laid bare the intentions of the government to persecute Opposition leaders after levelling false charges against them. "Many States have withdrawn the general consent to the CBI. Even the Supreme Court has said the CBI is a puppet of the [Central] government. The reversal of our decision signals the new government's real intentions," Mr. Sawant said.

BJP State chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule welcomed the move. "Why did the MVA regime withdraw the consent? What were its leaders scared of? If they had nothing to hide, they should have let the CBI probe cases," he said, hinting that the new move would expose the alleged corruption and malpractices of the MVA leaders.

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