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The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Government of Dr. Manmohan Singh have come under criticism for the perceived ham-handedness of the CBI in the investigation of a complaint regarding irregularities in the import of some foreign cars involving suspected evasion in the payment of duty.

2. In connection with the preliminary enquiry into the complaint, which precedes the registration of a First Information Report (FIR), the CBI allegedly raided the houses of Shri M. K. Stalin and Shri M. K. Alagiri, senior DMK leaders and sons of Shri M. Karunanidhi on the morning of March 21, 2013, while looking for the suspected cars.

3. Since the raids came a day after Shri Karunanidhi announced the withdrawal of the DMK from the ruling coalition in protest against the Government's policy on the violation of the human and political rights of the Sri Lankan Tamils by the Sri Lankan Government, there have been allegations that the raids were politically motivated to teach the DMK a lesson for its action.

4. Dr. Manmohan Singh and some senior Ministers from the Congress (I) have dissociated themselves from any responsibility for the controversial raid and found fault with the CBI action. There has been professional as well as political ham-handedness in the entire affair.

5. The CBI has the duty and the responsibility to take cognizance of reports of illegalities and investigate them if such investigation falls within its charter, irrespective of the political and other background of the persons against whom complaints have been made.
6. The timing of the investigation is in the hands of the CBI. Action has to be immediate where heinous offences such as murder or terrorism are involved or where there are reasons to apprehend tampering with the evidence by the wrong-doers if the investigation is delayed.
7. The investigation in connection with irregularities in the import of foreign cars did not come under any of these categories. It was not a heinous offence. Nor were there grounds to apprehend attempts to tamper with evidence.
8. The CBI could have chosen its timing keeping in view the possibility of misrepresentations and misprojections to attribute political motives to the raids in order to discredit the CBI as well as the Government. If it had delayed the raids by a few days till the heat of the controversy over the withdrawal of the DMK from the ruling coalition has died down, heavens would not have fallen. This is where sound professional judgment comes in. While one could not fault the CBI for the raids, one could fault its judgment in rushing with them.
9. There is so far no evidence to believe that the raids were undertaken at the instance of anyone in the Government or the Congress. It would seem that the Prime Minister and some senior Ministers were taken unawares by the raid. There were panic reactions due to a fear that the raids may further complicate the relations of the Congress with the DMK at a time when the Congress had not given up hopes of finding a face-saver that might enable the DMK to at least support the Government from outside.
10. In the resulting panic, the Prime Ministers and the senior Ministers handled the sequel to the raids with lack of political finesse---not only criticizing the CBI, but also giving the impression of asking the CBI to discontinue the raids. They forgot they had no powers to do so.
11. As a result of the mishandling by the Government, the CBI has been put in an embarrassing position. It will be suspected if it went ahead with the investigation and even more suspected if it did not.
12. Building up the credibility of the CBI as an independent organization known for its professionalism depends not only on its officers, but also on the political leadership which should refrain from actions or inactions that could impact on the prestige of the CBI.
13. In the final analysis, we will get the CBI we deserve. There is no point in blaming it all the time----right or wrong.

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