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## 1. PM-led panel removes CBI director

**Topic: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.**

### Why in news:

- The high-power committee, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday removed Alok Verma as CBI Director.

### More on the topic:

## Hot seat

*The drama at the CBI got curiously on Thursday with the high-power three-member committee deciding to transfer him out of the agency. A look at the rapid developments in the case:*

**October 23, 2018:** CBI Director Alok Verma directs that Special Director Rakesh Asthana, under investigation for alleged extortion and corruption, be divested of his responsibilities

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**October 23:** On the recommendation of the CVC, Mr. Verma is divested of all functions pending inquiry. Mr. Asthana is also stripped of his powers

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**October 23:** Interim responsibility as CBI chief given to M. Nageswara Rao, a 1986-batch Odisha cadre IPS officer

- Mr. Rao arrives at the CBI headquarters

before midnight, takes charge and remains there till morning. Orders are issued to transfer 13 officials, including those probing case against Mr. Asthana

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**October 24:** Mr. Verma comes to know he has been divested of all responsibilities, as mentioned by his lawyer in SC

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**October 24:** Mr. Verma's petition challenging the government order comes up in SC

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**January 8, 2019:** SC sets aside order against Mr. Verma, reinstating him as CBI chief, albeit with certain riders

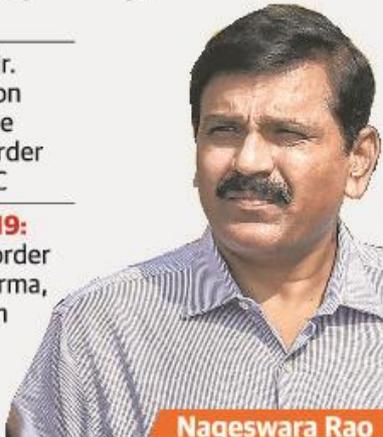
**January 9:** Mr. Verma resumes office, issues orders rescinding transfers and postings made by the interim chief

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**January 10:** Mr. Verma approves five more transfers and postings, hours before news breaks that he has been moved out of the CBI



**Alok Verma**



**Nageswara Rao**

- The decision to remove Mr. Verma was taken by a 2:1 majority in the three-member committee. Justice A.K. Sikri, a nominee of the Chief Justice of India, was the third member.
- The Cabinet Committee on Appointments posted Mr. Verma as Director-General, Fire Services, Civil Defence and Home Guards, for the remaining period of his term that ends on January 31.

### What is the procedure to appoint and removal of the CBI director?

- The CBI draws its legality from the 1946-Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE). The precursor to the CBI was the Special Police Establishment, which was India's first agency to investigate corruption. It was set in 1946 by the British.
- In 1963, the Home Ministry expanded its power and changed its name to the Central Bureau of Investigation. But, it is still governed by the 1946 Act.
- But now Lokpal Act governs the appointment of the CBI director.

- The CBI director is appointed by the Centre on the basis of the recommendation of a search committee comprising of the Prime Minister as the chairperson, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of Opposition.
- The Chief Justice of India can nominate a Supreme Court judge if he does not attend the search committee meeting.
- The same high power committee which has power to appoint CBI director can remove CBI director.

## 2. GST is made further easy by GST council

**Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.**

### Why in news:

- The GST Council, in its recent meeting, decided on a series of measures that will ease the tax and compliance burden for small businesses.

### More on the topic:

#### What are the new changes that have been brought?

- From now onwards, companies with annual turnover up to ₹40 lakh will stay out of the GST net (₹20 lakh earlier).

### Tax breather



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GST exemption limit raised to ₹40 lakh annual turnover from ₹20 lakh</li> <li>▪ Composition Scheme eligibility limit raised to ₹1.5 crore annual</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">turnover from April 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Such companies are allowed to file annual GST returns</li> <li>▪ Composition Scheme at 6% rate extended to service providers with turnover below ₹50 lakh</li> <li>▪ Kerala allowed to impose cess for disaster relief at up to 1% for a maximum of two years</li> </ul>
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- In the case of companies in the northeastern and hill States, the limit has been doubled to ₹20 lakh.
- The GST Council decided to allow Kerala to levy a cess of up to 1% for up to two years on intra-State supplies to help finance its disaster relief efforts.

- The annual turnover limit for eligibility for the Composition Scheme has also been raised to ₹1.5 crore from April 1. From that date, companies eligible for the Composition Scheme can file annual returns and pay taxes quarterly.
- The Composition Scheme currently allows companies with an annual turnover of up to ₹1 crore to opt for it, and file returns on a quarterly basis at a nominal rate of 1%. So far, only manufacturers and traders were eligible for this scheme.

#### **What is composition scheme?**

- Under this scheme, the government levy tax designed for small taxpayers (small businessmen and restaurant owners) with turnover is up to Rs. 1 crore. It enables taxpayers to make payments at a flat rate under GST, without input credits.
- The objective of the optional Composition Scheme is to bring simplicity and to reduce the compliance cost for the small taxpayers.

### **3. Centre aims to cut 20% pollution by 2024**

#### **Topic: Conservation of environment.**

#### **Why in news?**

- The Centre has launched a programme to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024 taking 2017 as base year.

#### **More on the topic:**

- The National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), which was formally unveiled on Thursday, is envisaged as a scheme to provide the States and the Centre with a framework to combat air pollution.
- The NCAP will be a mid-term, five-year action plan, with 2019 as the first year. This is not a pan-India, but a city-specific programme as per Union government sources
- The Environment Ministry has announced a budget of Rs 300 crore for two years to tackle air pollution across 102 cities, which have been identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for not meeting the pollution standards set by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
- City-specific action plans are being formulated for 102 non-attainment cities identified for implementing mitigation actions under NCAP.
- According to a Lancet Planetary Health report, one in every eight deaths in India is attributable to air pollution which now contributes to more disease burden than smoking.
- The estimates show that India, with 18 per cent of the global population, has a disproportionately high 26 per cent of the global premature deaths and disease burden due to air pollution. Over half of the 12.4 lakh deaths in India attributable to air pollution in 2017 were in persons younger than 70 years.

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