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Charges against Anil Deshmukh are serious, says Sharad Pawar

NCP president says Maharashtra CM Thackeray will take a decision on Minister

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) president Sharad Pawar on Sunday said the charges against senior NCP leader and Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh, are "serious" and any decision regarding him will be taken by Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

On Saturday, in an e-mail letter to the Chief Minister, Mr. Singh had alleged that the Home Minister had asked police officers, including the suspended officer Sachin Vaze, to collect ₹100 crore every month from bars and hotels in the city.

Mr. Pawar, however, questioned the timing of the allegations levelled by Mr. Singh, pointing out that they were made after he was removed

The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations

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SHARAD PAWAR,
NCP PRESIDENT



as police chief over "lapses" in the probe into the security threat outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence.

Mr. Pawar suggested an in-depth probe by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Julio Ribeiro, whose "credibility is beyond questioning".

He claimed that Mr. Vaze, who was suspended for over 16 years for his role in a custodial death case, was rein-

stated by Mr. Singh last year and neither the Chief Minister nor the State Home Minister was responsible for it.

"The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations against the Home Minister," Mr. Pawar said, adding, "I would suggest to Uddhav Thackeray to seek

Fadnavis calls for resignation

A day after a letter, allegedly written by Param Bir Singh, levelled "extortion" charges against Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, Leader of the Opposition, Devendra Fadnavis demanded that Mr. Deshmukh resign immediately. PAGE 9

former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro's help for looking into the claims made by Param Bir Singh."

The NCP chief told reporters at his official residence in Delhi that Mr. Param Bir Singh did meet him but it was only "when his transfer orders were about to be issued by the Maharashtra government".

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CM will decide on Anil Deshmukh, says Pawar

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"The allegations against the Maharashtra Home Minister are serious. Chief Minister has the full authority to take a decision regarding an inquiry on these allegations against the Home Minister," Mr. Pawar said, adding, "I would suggest to Uddhav Thackeray to seek former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro's help for looking into the claims made by Param Bir Singh."

The NCP chief told reporters at his official residence in Delhi that Mr. Param Bir Singh did meet him but it was only "when his transfer orders were about to be issued by the Maharashtra government".

Asked if there was an attempt to destabilise the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, the NCP chief said, "I don't know whether efforts are being made or not to topple the [MVA] government. All I can say is they will have no impact on the government."

The episode has led to tensions in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government as the Shiv Sena leadership is reported to be against Mr. Deshmukh's continuance as a Minister.

Mr. Pawar is learnt to have convened a meeting of party leaders including De-

Unavailable for probe: Ribeiro

Former IPS officer Julio Ribeiro has turned down NCP chief Sharad Pawar's suggestion that he probe ex-Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh's claim. "Nobody [in the State government] has contacted me. Even if they do, I'm unavailable," he said. "I am 92 years old. Nobody goes around doing this work at the age of 92... Why should a retired police officer be asked to do this?" the former Mumbai Police Commissioner asked. PTI

puty Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and State NCP chief Jayant Patil to discuss the issue. The NCP supremo also said the party must hear out Mr. Deshmukh, who has categorically denied all the allegations, before taking a final decision.

The central leadership of the Congress, the third partner in the MVA alliance, decided to adopt a 'wait and watch approach'. Party spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi said the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) Maharashtra in-charge, H.K. Patil, will speak on the issue soon.