

## **Finmeccanica chopper deal to be scrapped if charges proven: AK Antony**

Under fire over allegations of kickbacks in the Rs 3600 crore VVIP chopper deal, government today asserted that nobody found guilty will be spared and if wrongdoings were found by the CBI, the contract can be scrapped.

"Nobody will be spared whatever may be the consequences," Defence Minister A K Antony told reporters on the alleged Italian chopper scam.

Another scam had unfolded with the arrest yesterday of the head of a state-controlled Italian aerospace company that is suspected of paying bribes of about Rs 362 crore in India to get orders for helicopters to ferry Indian VVIPs, prompting the government to order a CBI probe.

The Ministry of Defence also decided to put on hold the receipt of the remaining nine of the 12 helicopters for which the Rs 3600 crore deal was struck in 2010.

Giuseppe Orsi, the head of Italian defence and aerospace giant Finmeccanica, was arrested on Monday in relation to a probe into international corruption.

He is suspected of involvement in the payment of bribes regarding the sale to the Indian government of 12 helicopters produced by Finmeccanica's subsidiary AgustaWestland.

Antony said CBI has been asked to give an early report on its probe into alleged kickbacks in the AgustaWestland helicopter deal.

"Once we get the preliminary inquiry report from CBI, strongest action will be taken against those found guilty," he said.

Asked about reports of the alleged role of former IAF chief SP Tyagi in the deal, the Minister said, "I have no information."

"After the CBI report, we will take serious action that may include cancelling the deal," he said.

"We don't want to jump the gun. We can get our money back even at this stage," Antony said on the Rs 3600 crore deal.

*(Economic Times)*