

CAG report on Rafale likely to be tabled today

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The government is likely to table the report by the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) on the Rafale fighter deal in Parliament on Tuesday, sources said.

The deal has generated a huge political controversy and continues to rock Parliament. The government's decision to buy 36 Rafale fighters from French company Dassault has become a controversial political issue, with the main Opposition party, the Congress, levelling allegations of corruption and impropriety, and the ruling party and the government defending the move.

The CAG report is, however, unlikely to be harsh on the government, the sources said. This is the last session of the 16th Lok Sabha as the general election is due to be held in April-May.

Former Union minister and senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal had on Sunday alleged a conflict of interest and urged the CAG, Mr Rajiv Mehrishi, to recuse himself from auditing the deal as he was the finance secretary when the deal was negotiated.

Union minister Arun Jaitley, however, rebutted Mr Sibal's claims, saying that the

CPM DEMANDS PROBE

◆ The CPI(M) on Monday demanded a high-level investigation into the Rafale deal and alleged that the CAG report's credibility was 'severely compromised' because of conflict of interest of its auditor

Chowkidar is important for the BJP/RSS, not his honesty?

— Mayawati, BSP chief



Congress was casting aspersions on the institution of the CAG based on "falsehoods". "Another attack on the institution of CAG by the 'institution wreckers' based on falsehood. After 10 years in government, former UPA ministers still don't know that finance secretary is only a designation given to the seniormost secretary in the finance ministry," Mr Jaitley said in a series of tweets of Sunday.

Mr Sibal said Mr Mehrishi was finance

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secretary from October 24, 2014 to August 30, 2015, and in between Prime Minister Narendra Modi had gone to Paris on April 10, 2015 and announced the signing of the Rafale deal. "The finance min-

istry plays an important role in these negotiations... Now it is clear the Rafale deal happened under Rajiv Mehrishi. Now he is the CAG. We met him twice on September 19 and October 4, 2018. We told him about

the scam. We told him that the deal should be probed because it is corrupt. But how can he initiate a probe against himself," Mr Sibal had said. The Rafale issue was even raised before the Supreme Court, which

did not find any substance in the allegations. However, the issue has continued to rock Parliament with Congress president Rahul Gandhi directly accusing the PM of benefiting Anil Ambani in the deal.