

## Thoothukudi firing: Madras HC asks DVAC to probe assets owned by cops named by probe panel, close relatives

Officials involved in firing that killed 13, seemed to have acted as per wishes of Sterlite management, which was unable to tolerate people's protest against operation of its plant, said the court

**DTNEXT Bureau | 15 July 2024 8:31 PM**



CHENNAI: Coming down heavily on the police officials involved in the firing and killing of 13 anti-Sterlite protesters and the police department itself, and even the CBI which probed the matter, the Madras High Court directed the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) to file a report on the assets and liabilities of officials named in report of the Justice (retd) Aruna Jagadeesan commission that probed the matter.

A division bench of Justice SS Sundar and Justice N Senthilkumar said it suspected that the police officials opened fire with a hidden agenda for personal gain, and directed the DVAC to conduct an inquiry and file a report on the assets owned by the officials and their close relatives.

The agency should check the assets two years before and after the firing incident, it added while hearing a petition moved by human rights activist Henri Tiphagne against the premature closure of the Thoothukudi firing investigation.

The officials involved in the firing that killed 13 people seemed to have acted as per the wishes of Sterlite management, which was unable to tolerate the people's protest against the operation of its plant in Thoothukudi, said the court. The whole police department was not considering the voiceless people as human beings. which was a threat to society, it said.

After perusing the final report submitted by the CBI, the bench said the central agency was hand in glove with the officials named in the commission report and gave them a clean chit. The CBI, it added, was ineffective in finding out the facts and the final report was merely a story, stating that the police opening fire on protestors was not pre-planned and was done to avoid any untoward incidents.

The report revealed the lack of credibility and no application of mind by the CBI officials, who ignored several incidents that followed the firing, it said. After giving the directions to the DVAC, the court adjourned the matter after two weeks.

Tiphagne filed the petition against an order passed by the National Human Rights Commission on October 25, 2018, closing the suo motu proceedings it had initiated. He sought a re-investigation in the case based on his complaint.

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