

2018 Sterlite firing case: Supreme Court stays DVAC probe into assets of IAS, IPS officers

The Madras High Court had ordered the DVAC probe last month on suspicions that there may have been officials involved in carrying out an industrialist's agenda which led to the Sterlite police firing incident in 2018.

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The Supreme Court on Friday stayed a probe by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) into the assets of civil servants who were posted at Thoothukudi during the 2018 Sterlite police firing incident [S Chandran and ors vs Henri Tiphagne and ors].



A Bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) **DY Chandrachud** with Justices **JB Pardiwala** and **Manoj Misra** also sought the response of the Tamil Nadu government and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in the matter.

The matter concerns the [2018 police firing at the Sterlite copper plant in Thoothukudi](#), which led to the deaths of 13 unarmed persons who were among those protesting against the expansion of the Vedanta-owned plant.

At the time of the incident, the protestors had been demanding that the plant be shut down as it was causing environmental damage to the area.

The Sterlite plant was the largest copper smelter in the country until its closure that year. In 2021, an [activist, Henri Tiphagne](#) approached the Madras High Court seeking the continuance of an NHRC probe into the incident.

Tiphagne had filed the petition challenging the NHRC's decision to abruptly close its *suo motu* probe into the matter.

On July 25 this year, the Madras High Court said that it believed that the [police firing at the Sterlite copper plant in Thoothukudi](#) was a pre-determined act carried out by the authorities at the behest of "one industrialist."

The State must, thus, investigate if the officers involved in such agenda received any monetary gains, the High Court had opined.

It proceeded to [direct the Tamil Nadu DVAC](#) to conduct a probe into the assets of all the officers, including Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, who were posted there at the relevant time.

This directive has been challenged by the affected civil servants before the Supreme Court, which has now ordered a stay.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal appeared before the Supreme Court on behalf of the Tamil Nadu officials implicated in the case.

On a related note, in February this year, the Supreme Court [dismissed a plea](#) filed by Vedanta seeking the re-opening of the copper smelter plant.

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