

## CJI Led Bench Stays DVAC Probe into Assets of IAS, IPS Officers | 2018 Sterlite Firing Case

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The Supreme Court Today (August 2nd) 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.



NEW DELHI: On August 2nd, the Supreme Court intervened to halt a probe by the Tamil Nadu Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) into the assets of civil servants stationed in Thoothukudi during the infamous 2018 Sterlite police firing incident.

The Bench, led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, along with Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, also requested responses from the Tamil Nadu government and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) regarding the case.

The core issue stems from the 2018 police firing at the Sterlite copper plant in Thoothukudi, which tragically resulted in the deaths of 13 unarmed protesters.

These individuals were part of a larger group demonstrating against the expansion of the Vedanta-owned plant, which they claimed was causing significant environmental harm to the region. At the time, the Sterlite plant was the largest copper smelter in the country until its closure later that year.

**In 2021, activist Henri Tiphagne approached the Madras High Court, seeking to continue the NHRC's investigation into the incident. Tiphagne's petition challenged the NHRC's abrupt decision to close its suo motu probe into the matter.**

On July 25 of this year, the Madras High Court stated that it believed the police firing at the Sterlite copper plant in Thoothukudi was a premeditated act executed by the authorities at the behest of "one industrialist".

The High Court suggested that the State investigate whether the officers involved in the incident had received any monetary gains. Consequently, the court directed the Tamil Nadu DVAC to investigate the assets of all officers, including those in the Indian Police Service (IPS) and Indian Administrative Service (IAS), who were posted there during the relevant period.

This directive has now been challenged by the affected civil servants in the Supreme Court, which has temporarily stayed the probe.

Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal represented the Tamil Nadu officials implicated in the case before the Supreme Court.

In a related development, earlier this year in February, the Supreme Court dismissed a plea filed by Vedanta seeking the reopening of the copper smelter plant.

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