

## **Thoothukudi firing: HC directs DVAC to probe into assets of police, revenue officials**

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DVAC to inquire assets accumulated by police and revenue officials before and after the incident; Madras High Court wants to know if there was any quid pro quo that led to the firing; DVAC ordered to submit its report by July 29.

The Madras High Court on Monday directed the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti Corruption (DVAC) to conduct an inquiry into the assets of police and revenue personnel involved in the 2018 Thoothukudi Sterlite police firing, in which 13 protesters were shot dead, and submit a report before July 29.

A Division Bench of Justices SS Sundar and N Senthilkumar ordered that the assets procured by the individuals in their names and the names of spouses and close relatives at least two years before the police firing, as well as two years after the incident, must be collated and submitted.

The direction was issued on a writ petition filed by human rights activist Henri Tiphagne in 2021 against the closure of his complaint, regarding the brutal killing of those who protested against Vedanta-owned Sterlite copper smelting plant in Thoothukudi, by the National Human Rights Commission.

Justice Sundar said, “All this happened because one industrialist wanted this to happen. He wanted to teach a lesson to everyone and therefore, he made it happen and you all acted only for him.” He expressed dissatisfaction over the investigation conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the police firing and the chargesheet filed against just one inspector before the Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) in Madurai in December 2023.

Though the CJM refused to accept the chargesheet and ordered further investigation, the CBI re-submitted the same chargesheet in June stating that “further investigation did not reveal criminality on the part of any public servant warranting filing of any supplementary chargesheet.”

### **‘CBI failed’**

Expressing disappointment over such a report filed before the CJM, the senior judge in the Bench said, “The CBI has actually failed. Is this how you conduct the

investigation? No court will accept this. You are now hand in glove with the people who are respondents (the police and revenue officials) here.”

Though the CBI concluded that the firing against protesters was not pre-mediated and that the police personnel had to open fire only as a last resort, the Division Bench said there were certain materials to doubt the conclusion arrived at by the investigating agency.

Justice Sundar wondered how did a protest that was conducted peacefully for nearly 100 days turned violent on the day of the firing. Though it was claimed that the protesters attempted to vandalise the Collectorate, one of them had been shot dead at Therespuram located about seven kilometres away, he said.

Therefore, in order to find out the truth, the judges directed the DVAC to conduct an inquiry regarding the assets accumulated by the police as well as the revenue personnel two years before and after the firing incidents.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/thoothukudi-firing-hc-directs-dvac-to-probe-into-assets-of-police-revenue-officials/article68407933.ece>