



Thoothukudi police firing: How can CBI file chargesheet against only one Inspector of Police, asks Madras HC judge

Mohamed Imranullah S.

CHENNAI

Justice J. Nisha Banu of the Madras High Court on Tuesday wondered how the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) can file a chargesheet against only one Inspector of Police for the 2018 Thoothukudi police firing, which led to the death of 13 anti-Sterlite protesters.

Presiding over a Division Bench, along with Justice N. Mala, the senior judge asked if it was humane on the part of the CBI to do so. CBI Special Public Prosecutor K. Srinivasan said further investigation was being carried out.

Human rights activist Henri Tiphagne, of *People's Watch*, told the Bench that Madurai Chief Judicial Magistrate A. Pasumpon Shanmugiah had, on December 6, 2023, rejected the chargesheet filed against R. Tirumalai, who was promoted to the post of Deputy Superintendent of Police before being suspended from service.

'Conduct fair probe'

Apprehending that the further investigation now being conducted by the CBI, on the directions of the CJM, might also not be effective, Mr. Tiphagne urged the Bench to order the constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) by the State government to conduct a fair probe.

Since the State govt. had accepted the report submitted by Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry, constituted to probe into the police firing, and tabled it in the Legislative Assembly too, there should not be any impediment now for the constitution of an SIT, he said.

The submissions were made during the hearing of a writ petition filed by him in 2021 against the closure of a complaint lodged regarding the police firing before the National Human Rights Commission.



The Thoothukudi police firing led to the death of 13 anti-Sterlite protesters.

"There is no point in asking the same CBI to conduct further investigation," he said.

'Not pre-determined'

On the other hand, the CBI, in a status report filed before the Division Bench, said, its investigation revealed clearly that the police had opened fire not with a pre-determined mind but only as a last resort to prevent further untoward incidents.

Terming the death of the 13 anti-Sterlite protesters as unfortunate, CBI Deputy Inspector General of Police S. Nirmal Devi, the signatory of the status report, said the investigating agency had sent a self-contained note to the Tamil Nadu Home Secretary as well as the DGP to initiate appropriate action against certain officials.

The officials named in the note were the then Thoothukudi Collector N. Venkatesh, sub-collector M.S. Prasanth, tahsildar Rajkumar Thangaseelan, sub-inspector of police Rennies, and head constable Raja. The CBI had asked the State government to take action, as it deemed fit, against these individuals.

After taking the status report on file, the Division Bench asked Mr. Tiphagne to respond to it by December 19.