



CBI promises reinvestigation, Madras HC not amused

Published: 13th December 2023 08:31 AM

A Division Bench of Justices J Nisha Banu and N Mala made the remark when a petition regarding the Thoothukudi firing, filed by executive director of People's Watch Henry Tiphane came up for hearing.

The police firing on anti-Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi | File picBy R SivakumarExpress News Service

CHENNAI: Indicating disappointment over the CBI indicting only one police officer in the chargesheet pertaining to the police firing on anti-Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi in 2018, the Madras High Court has remarked that the central agency might take another 10 years to probe the case if it reopens the investigation.

A Division Bench of Justices J Nisha Banu and N Mala made the remark when a petition regarding the Thoothukudi firing, filed by executive director of People's Watch Henry Tiphane came up for hearing on Tuesday. After going through a status report filed by the special crime branch (SCB) of CBI on the matter, the bench questioned the CBI counsel Srinivasan as to why only one police officer (the inspector Thirumalai) was included in the chargesheet and the names of others dropped.

The counsel for the CBI said CBI had held the probe without any bias and will hold a re-investigation into the case as was recently ordered by the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Madurai. Expressing disappointment over the CBI probe, Henry Tiphane said it would be ideal if the state government constitutes a special investigation team (SIT) to hold a fresh probe into the indiscriminate firing by police which snuffed the lives of 13 people during the protest. The Chief Judicial Magistrate in Madurai, which is a special court for CBI cases, had recently rejected the case chargesheet filed by the CBI based on a protest petition filed by the then Thoothukudi district secretary of CPM KS Arjunan.

The status report filed by the CBI in the High Court noted that a self-contained note was sent to the Chief Secretary and the DGP to take appropriate action against the then district collector of Thoothukudi N Venkatesh, sub-collector MS Prasanth, then tahsildar Rajkumar Thangaseelan (since deceased), sub-inspector Rennies and head constable Raja.

"There were serious lapses found on the part of senior revenue officers, and in this regard, the state government has been requested to take appropriate action against those whose performance of duty was not in commensuration with the position they held," the report noted, adding that similarly, in respect to a few other police officials also, departmental action has been recommended for their lapses.

Further, the report stated the CBI probe clearly showed the firing was "not pre-determined" and the same was done only as a "last resort" to prevent further untoward incidents, though the death of 13 persons was very unfortunate. The bench adjourned the case to December 19 for further hearing.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/dec/13/cbi-promises-reinvestigation-madras-hc-not-amused-2641049.html>