

NATION, CURRENT AFFAIRS

We're halfway through struggle: Anti-Sterlite activists

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | M. ARULOLI

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CPI(M) state secretary K. Balakrishnan met the press on Monday in the party office after the Supreme Court verdict on Sterlite. Central committee member P. Vasuki also present (Photo: DC)

Thoothukudi: The two-member bench of the Supreme Court's verdict that National Green Tribunal (NGT) has no jurisdiction to hear the private copper smelter plant in Thoothukudi against the Tamil Nadu government's order to close down the plant, however, has not given full

satisfaction to the anti-Sterlite activists, who feel that they are only halfway through the process of a permanent closure of the plant.

In celebration of the Supreme Court order on Monday quashing the NGT's December 15, 2018 order favouring Sterlite, coordinator, anti-Sterlite people's movement, Prof Fathima Babu, lighted fireworks in front of 'Our Lady of Snow' Church here, and distributed sweets along with her supporters. She, however, said that their objective was yet to be reached.

“We are just halfway through in our struggle, as Sterlite has all possibility to approach the Madras High Court as has been directed by the Supreme Court,” said Fathima Babu, and added that they would be watchful against any such move of the plant.

Another activist group - Federation of Tamils against Sterlite - led by its coordinator, M Krishnamoorthy, met Thoothukudi district collector, Sandeep Nanduri, and thanked him by giving him sweets, for being with the people on the issue.

Krishnamoorthy also said that the apex court judgment vindicated their stand against the smelter plant. He also expressed his view that the plant authorities could anytime move the Madras High Court, on the issue.

On the other hand, the Sterlite administration still believes that they have not lost the battle, as according to an official source from Sterlite, the Supreme Court has decided only on grounds of maintainability of the case, and not on grounds of merit.

“We are firm in our stand to fight out the case,” said a Sterlite official. Responding to the dismissal of the NGT order by the Supreme Court, material evacuation process that was under process in the plant, based on directions of the NGT too has now been stopped, said Collector Sandeep Nanduri.

Plea in HC to direct police to produce anti-Sterlite activist

An advocate has approached the Madras high court to direct the police to produce Mugilan alias Shanmugam, an anti-Sterlite activist, whose whereabouts were not known from February 16, 2019, before the court and set him at liberty.

A division bench comprising Justices M.Sathyannarayanan and M.Nirmal Kumar, before whom the petition filed by advocate Henri Tiphagne came up for hearing, directed the Additional public prosecutor to get instruction and posted to February 22, further hearing of the case.

According to petitioner, Mugilan as coordinator of Tamil Nadu Environment Protection Movement and having conducted field research studies on his own and on the basis of the documents and evidence, addressed a press meet in Chennai on February 15, 2019 regarding the killing of 16 persons in police firing at Thoothukudi during the anti-Sterlite protest on May 22, 2018.

During the press meet, he released a report and video titled “Sterlite Hidden Truth” regarding the violence that was unleashed prior to the police firing on May 22. He also stated that the violence and police firing was allegedly orchestrated by the police in connivance with the management of sterlite industries.

Later, after the meeting he spoke to his friend Sridhar and informed him that he was in Nagercoil Special Train and reach Madurai by 10.30 a.m. on the next day. His mobile phone was active till 1.45 a.m. on February 16, 2019, and thereafter has lost connectivity. His whereabouts were not

known thereafter, he added.