CB-CID gets two weeks to trace Mugilan

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Prosecution says a record number of 148 witnesses were examined in five days

The Madras High Court on Monday granted the Crime Branch-Criminal Investigation Department (CB-CID) time till March 18 to trace the anti-Sterlite activist T. Mugilan alias Shanmugam. The time was granted at the instance of the prosecution which claimed to have examined 148 witnesses so far.

Justices M. Sathyanarayanan and M. Nirmal Kumar recorded the submission made by Additional Public Prosecutor C. Iyapparaj that the CB-CID had taken up the investigation in the case on February 27 and within five days it had examined a record number of 148 witnesses, including the activist's wife and family members.

"Apart from examination of witnesses, other procedures such as circulation of pamphlets have been carried out. We have put maximum efforts to trace the whereabouts of the missing person. The investigation is in a preliminary stage. We may be given two weeks time to report the progress to the court," the APP said.

The submission was made in response to a public interest litigation petition filed by human rights activist and advocate Henri Tiphagne of People's Watch, a non-governmental organisation based in Madurai.

Appearing on behalf of him, advocate Sudha Ramalingam accused the police of being insensitive to the entire issue. She said it was a serious case of an activist having gone missing within hours after he released a video to the media in Chennai on February 15 to support his claim of the police having orchestrated the Thoothukudi firing in which 13 were killed on May 22 last year. He went missing after boarding a train from Chennai to Madurai.

Many activists had taken to the social media to question the whereabouts of Mr. Mugilan. However, in an insensitive reply to those posts, an Inspector of

Police attached to Rajapalayam police station said: "Samadhi (in the grave),"
she alleged and claimed that the police were asking the witnesses irrelevant
questions.