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Custodial death: CB-CID arrests five policemen, one Home Guard

CHENNAI MAY 07, 2022 21:11 IST

The Crime Branch-CID of the Tamil Nadu police on Saturday arrested five policemen and one Home Guard for their involvement in the death of Vignesh in custody here on April 19, police sources said.

Acting on the instructions of Director-General of Police (CB-CID) M. Shakeel Akhter, a special team interrogated the police personnel who were on duty on April 18 and 19 and took them into custody, sources in the investigating agency said.

During the course of investigation and enquiries made with eye-witnesses, the role of the five police personnel and one Home Guard was established. Their names were given as constable Paunraj, head constable Munaf, special sub-inspector Kumar, Home Guard Deepak, Armed Reserve Police constables Jagajeevan and Chandra kumar. The accused persons were produced in a city court for remand, the sources said.

Sections altered

Hours after Chief Minister M.K. Stalin informed the Assembly on Friday that the CB-CID had been directed to convert the case into that of murder and frame murder charges against the police personnel concerned after the post-mortem report revealed "13 injury marks" on the body of Vignesh, the investigating agency included Section 302 (murder) of the IPC and provisions of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of

Atrocities) Act, 1988, in the First Information Report against the accused police personnel.

The sources said investigators would soon examine the family members of Vignesh, his employer Ranjith, autorickshaw driver Prabhu and others. The statement of Suresh, who was arrested along with Vignesh, would be crucial as he was a direct witness, the sources said, adding that efforts were on to seize the CCTV footage relating to the incident — from the scene of arrest of Vignesh on April 18 and till his being taken to hospital allegedly after developing epilepsy the next day — from all possible sources.

Family returns bribe

The family of Vignesh offered to return ₹1 lakh allegedly paid as bribe by the police to remain silent on the issue.

According to Henri Tiphagne, executive director, People's Watch- Tamil Nadu, Vinod, brother of Vignesh, appeared before the judicial magistrate on Friday and offered to return the money paid to him by the police in two instalments of ₹50,000 each.

However, the magistrate refused to receive the cash but assured him that his statement would be recorded. While ₹50,000 was given by an inspector, the second instalment was paid by a sub-inspector who came in plainclothes, he said.

Mr. Tiphagne said he, along with some other senior lawyers and human rights activists, had moved the family of Vignesh to a safe location since they were under threat. "We have informed the court and the police that the family members will appear when summoned and cooperate with the investigation as per law," he said.

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