

Supreme Court stays Madras HC order for fresh probe into 2018 Thoothukudi firing case

The Madras HC had ordered DVAC to investigate the assets of all the accused in the case and remarked that the officials “worked for an industrialist”.

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The Supreme Court, on Friday, August 2, stayed the Madras High Court order that directed a fresh probe into the assets of IPS and IAS officers and government officials named as accused in the 2018 Thoothukudi firing case. A bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra passed the order while hearing an appeal moved by S Chandran. The Madras HC, on July 15, remarked that the officials



“worked for an industrialist” and ordered the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-corruption (DVAC) to investigate the assets of all the accused in the case.

“Till the next date of listing, the impugned order dated July 15 passed by the Madras high court shall remain stayed,” the bench said.

In 2018, several Thoothukudi residents gathered peacefully to demand the shutting down of Sterlite Copper. The civil protest that went on for about 100 days ended in unprecedented violence and led to open firing by the police, which resulted in the death of 14 people. The police fired on the protesters for two successive days on May 22 and 23, 2018, injuring more than 100 people. The NHRC had taken up a suo motu investigation and the Tamil Nadu government also appointed former Madras high court judge Aruna Jagadeesan to conduct a probe into the matter. The committee submitted the report in October 2022, and held 21 officers responsible for the firing. Meanwhile, the NHRC closed the case. This closure was challenged by Henry Tiphagne at the Madras HC.

The HC had remarked that the protestors were protesting peacefully for 100 days. “But some people could not digest the fact that the people were raising their voices. That's why all this happened. What happened on that day was a planned major violence. Because these people are poor, their voices were silenced. But everyone has to pay their price one day,” the court said, and directed the DVAC to look into the assets of the officers who are accused, as well as their family and relatives. The court asked the probe to be conducted at the time of the incident and two years before and after the incident.

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