

## Activist Mugilan taken into custody at Katpadi

He was detained by the police at Tirupati railway station. A special team of the Crime Branch CID of the Tamil Nadu police took him into custody at Katpadi. He will be brought to Chennai

Nearly six months after he vanished upon boarding a train to Madurai from here, environmental activist T. Mugilan alias Shanmugam was detained by the police at Tirupati railway station on Saturday.

Soon after a video of Mr. Mugilan raising slogans in police custody went viral on social media, his son Kaar Muhilan confirmed to *The Hindu* that the man sporting a beard and a white shirt was indeed his father.

While railway police took the activist to the Katpadi railway station, a special team of the Crime Branch CID of the Tamil Nadu police took him into custody. He will be brought to Chennai.

Earlier, CB-CID Director-General of Police M.S. Jaffar Sait said he received information that a person resembling Mr. Mugilan had been spotted in Tirupati and taken to Katpadi. "We have sent a team to verify the input. It is too early to comment or confirm anything at this stage," he said.

The news of Mr. Mugilan being spotted in Tirupati was conveyed to the Tamil Nadu police by Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, Peoples' Watch, a human rights organisation. "We are happy that he has been spotted alive. I have passed on this information to the Tamil Nadu police for appropriate action," he said, adding that the CB-CID should rescue the activist from the Andhra Pradesh police and produce him before the Madras High Court. However, Andhra Pradesh DGP Gautham Sawang told *The Hindu* that the activist had not been arrested by the State police.

When reports last came in, the activist was taken into custody by the CB-CID team at the Katpadi railway station. He would be taken for a routine medical check, sources in the agency said.

Mr. Mugilan went missing soon after holding a press conference in Chennai on February 15, exposing the alleged role of the police in the violence during the anti-Sterlite protest. The activist disappeared under mysterious circumstances after boarding a train to Madurai at Egmore station.

Since he was actively involved in protests against the nuclear power plant in Kudankulam, illegal sand mining in southern districts, the hydrocarbon project in Neduvasal and the Sterlite plant in Thoothukudi, political parties and rights activists were apprehensive about his safety, forcing the Tamil Nadu government to transfer the case to the CB-CID.

The CB-CID was also on the lookout for Mr. Mugilan in connection with an alleged rape case. A woman had lodged complaint with the Kulithalai police in Karur district claiming that he had cheated and raped her. A case under Section 376 (rape), 417 (cheating) of the IPC and Section 4 of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Women Harassment Act was registered against him. The case was later transferred to the CB-CID.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/activist-mugilan-spotted-in-tirupati-son-confirms-identity/article28307403.ece>