



2018 Thoothukudi police firing | Disciplinary action initiated against the then Collector, Tamil Nadu govt. informs Madras High Court

Advocate General R. Shunmugasundaram says explanations had also been sought and received from the then IG, DIG, SP, DSP and a host of others

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The Tamil Nadu government on Friday apprised the Madras High Court of the status of action initiated against the former Collector of Thoothukudi, N. Venkatesh; an Inspector General of Police; a Deputy Inspector General of Police; a Superintendent of Police; and 17 others in connection with the police firing on May 22, 2018 in which 13 anti-Sterlite protesters were killed.



Appearing before a Division Bench of Justices J. Nisha Banu and N. Mala, Advocate General R. Shunmugasundaram said disciplinary action had been initiated against Mr. Venkatesh and charges were framed against him under Rule 10 of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, applicable to Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, on October 25, 2022.

The officer had submitted his written statement of defence on March 23, 2023, denying lapses on his part. Therefore, the government had appointed senior IAS officer Dheeraj Kumar as the Inquiring Authority to conduct an elaborate inquiry, the A-G said. The submissions were made during the hearing of a 2021 writ petition filed by human rights activist Henri Tiphagne of People's Watch.

The A-G told the court the government had also sought explanation for the police firing from the then Inspector General of Police (South Zone), Shailesh Kumar; Deputy Inspector General of Police (Tirunelveli Range) Kapil Kumar C. Saratkar; Thoothukudi Superintendent of Police P. Mahendran; and Deputy Superintendent of Police R. Lingathirumaran on October 17, 2022.

They submitted their explanations on different dates between November 18, 2022 and March 28, 2023. Their explanations had been received by the government,

through the Director General of Police/Head of Police Force (DGP/HoPF), and were under examination, the top law officer informed the court.

He further said that the Central Bureau of Investigation had in 2018 itself registered a criminal case over the firing against Tirumalai, who was serving as the Inspector of Pudukottai police station in Thoothukudi district. Thereafter, he got promoted as the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Social Justice and Human Rights wing, Tirunelveli city, but placed under suspension with effect from October 20, 2022.

Similarly, the prime shooter, A. Sudalaikannu (Grade I constable), and two other constables — M. Shankar and Satheesh Kumar — too were suspended from service on October 20, 2022 and departmental action was initiated against all three of them under the Tamil Nadu Police Subordinate Service (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1955, the A-G told the Division Bench.

He said explanations had been sought and received from two more Inspectors, N. Hariharan and T. Parthiban, and were under examination. Further, departmental action under the 1955 Rules was initiated against Sub Inspectors of Police Sorna Mani and M. Rennis, and constables Raja, Thandavamoorthy, Mathivanan, M. Kannan and A. Raja.

Apart from police personnel, departmental action under the Tamil Nadu Civil Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules had been initiated against the then Deputy Tahsildars, B. Sekar and M. Kannan, and Divisional Excise Officer S. Chandran. The incumbent Thoothukudi Collector would be instructed to finalise the disciplinary proceedings against the three revenue officials at the earliest, the A-G added.

It was brought to the notice of the court that departmental action was initiated pursuant to submission of the final report by Justice Aruna Jagadeesan Commission of Inquiry, constituted to probe into the firing, in May 2022. However, in a letter to the Public Department on November 9, 2023, DGP/HoPF Shankar Jiwal had said that no criminal case was registered against the police personnel named by the Commission.

“No FIR was registered against the police officers/police personnel whose names appear in the report of the Inquiry Commission headed by retired honourable judge Tmt. Aruna Jagadeesan as the government has not issued any order for initiating criminal action against them,” the letter read.

The judges perused the letter and adjourned the case for further hearing to December 11.

They wanted State Public Prosecutor Hasan Mohamed Jinnah and CBI Special Public Prosecutor K. Srinivasan to be present on that day to apprise the court of the status of all criminal cases booked in connection with the police firing.

Justice Banu also wanted to know the specific charges that had been levelled against the officials in the disciplinary proceedings.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/2018-thoothukudi-police-firing-disciplinary-action-initiated-against-the-then-collector-tamil-nadu-govt-informs-madras-high-court/article67543500.ece>