

Thoothukudi police firing: Tamil Nadu govt says action initiated against 21 officers Senior IAS officer nominated to inquire into charges of lapses against then district collector in handling situation

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CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government on Friday informed the Madras High Court that disciplinary and departmental action, including suspension from service, has been initiated against 21 officers, including an IAS officer and two IPS officers, in connection with the police firing on anti-

Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi in 2018.

The submission was made in a status report filed through Advocate General (AG) R Shunmugasundaram before a division bench of Justices J Nisha Banu and N Mala when a petition filed by human rights activist Henry Tiphane regarding the indiscriminate firing, which snuffed out the lives of 13 protesters, came up for hearing.

The departmental action has been initiated based on the recommendations of the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan commission report, the AG told the bench.

According to the report, “Disciplinary action has been initiated (against then district collector N Venkatesh) and charges have been framed under rule 10 of All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules through an order dated October 25, 2022.”

Senior IAS officer Dheeraj Kumar has been appointed as the inquiring authority to look into the disciplinary action against the then collector, though he had denied lapses in handling the situation.

The explanations furnished by then Inspector General (IG) of Police, South Zone, Shailesh Kumar Yadav, then Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Tirunelveli Range, Kapil Kumar C Saratkar, and then SP of Thoothukudi P Mahendran are ‘under examination’.

Moreover, the explanations submitted by DSP R Lingathirumaran and Inspector N Hariharan have also been examined by the concerned authorities, the AG told the bench.

He said that four police officials, including then inspector of Pudukottai police station in Thoothukudi district Thirumalai, were placed under suspension and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against Thirumalai.

This apart, departmental action has been initiated against seven police personnel and three revenue department officers including two deputy tahsildars and a divisional excise officer regarding the police firing.

Henry Tiphane had filed the petition against the decision of the National Human Rights Commission's decision to wind up its suo motu inquiry into the incident based on a report of the state government but hushed up the findings of its own investigation division.

The judges wanted the AG to file an explanation on the specific charges framed against each of the 21 officers and personnel and questioned the status of the CBI probe and the case registered by it.

Shunmugasundaram told the bench he would ask the prosecutor for the CBI and the State Public Prosecutor to appear before the court to answer these queries. The judges posted the matter for further hearing on December 11, 2023.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2023/nov/17/thoothukudi-police-firing-tamil-nadu-govt-says-action-initiated-against-21-officers-2633797.html>