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Cops' celebration over rowdy encounter leaves public baffled

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Madurai: The encounter of a prime suspect in the constable killing case in Chennai evoked wild celebrations among many police personnel with many of them posting a series of messages and pictures on social media. Anandan, 22, who along with others unleashed a deadly attack on constable Rajavelu in Chennai on Monday night was encountered by the police on Tuesday night.

Tagging fellow policemen, many on Facebook with their pictures in police uniform shared messages stating that this would be the fate of anyone who attacked the police or even thinks of attacking the them.

“This (encounter) is just the beginning”, “You should fear the police”, “constables and field level police personnel are overjoyed by the encounter and are celebrating it in our WhatsApp groups. We don't know about the WhatsApp group of the officers,” “dare to touch the police” are some of the messages that are being shared by police personnel on Facebook.

However, these celebrations has left the public baffled, especially because this encounter comes more than a month after the police firing that claimed 13 lives during the anti-Sterlite protest in Tuticorin on May 22 and 23. Admitting encounters should not be celebrated, field level police personnel said the social media messages mean no harm to the public.

Police personnel said that there have been a series of attacks on the department personnel. Jagadeesh Durai, a special branch police constable who tried to stop illegal sand miners was beaten to death by a gang near Nanguneri in Tirunelveli district in May this year. “We were upset over such attacks. The Taramani encounter will instil fear in the minds of miscreants who take the police lightly,” added another policeman.

“The encounter has come as a good news for police constables, especially those engaged in night patrolling, as we are in

constant fear while on duty. We don't have anything other than a lathi. But goons have knives, liquor bottles and anything they get to attack us," said another police constable on condition of anonymity.

However, senior personnel said police should have the highest tolerance and that those in the lower ranks who have joined the police force in recent years are the ones who indulge in such acts. "These young police constables are mostly graduates. Some of them even have an engineering degree. Their tolerance limit is very less," added a head constable who is in the force for more than two decades.

Strongly condemning the celebration by the police, human rights defender Henri Tiphagne of People's Watch said the police are a disciplined force and disciplinary action should be taken against those identifying themselves as police and indulging in celebrating encounters. "This shows the audacity of the police. The DGP should pull up such personnel as they are celebrating a murder. Officers are in connivance if they refuse to take action," he said.

A senior police officer in Chennai said that they have asked policemen not to celebrate the encounter. "We will look into the issue of celebrations that were shared on social media," an officer told TOI.