

Malda custodial death : FM finds gaping holes in internal report & orders independent probe

By TIOL Edit Team

NOTHING

could be more brazen, manipulative and ugly for the Kolkata Customs than to unashamedly deny its hand in the recently reported Malda custodial death case. It is learnt that after TIOL broke the tale of misdeeds of Kolkata Customs the MoF topbrass asked for a report. And as it could have been predicted the report was meticulously and 'studiously' tailored to wash its hands of the issue. The 'killer' Kolkata Customs simply stated that the **deceased was never arrested by the West Bengal Preventive Commissionerate officials!**

Worse, the well known intellectually-honest Chief Commissioner did not apply his mind or used his own channel of information to question the flaws in the report which was tailored for the MoF topbrass. It was simply endorsed and dispatched with unruffled sensitivities. Here the concerned Board also did not even take a proper look at the report having multiple gaping holes. It also exhibited stunning insensitivity to an issue related to curtailment of life of a budding young man. It simply forwarded the report to the topbrass.

All those who were associated with the drafting of this report never thought that they have one of the most brilliant lawyers as their Finance Minister. So, obviously, it was the FM's turn to see the gaping holes in the report. It is learnt that he termed it as **more serious offence than what could have been if the Customs could have officially arrested the deceased.**

It is learnt that the MoF topbrass has indicated that detaining the deceased for more than 24 hours in Custom House without completing any official procedures was more glaringly illegal as the deceased would not have jumped into Custom House toilet only to commit suicide! Having found the report cursory and doctored, a fresh inquiry has been ordered and the **Zonal Member** has been instructed to conduct an **independent probe.**

Meanwhile, the West Bengal Preventive Commissionerate is learnt to have suspended those officers who provided mere logistics to their visiting brethren who are now in the docks. This has predictably infuriated the Association of these officers who recently gheraoed the office of the Chief Commissioner for seven hours, demanding action against those who are alleged to have committed the heinous crime.

But what is more shocking is the fact that the **CBEC appears to be acting as a silent spectator**

in this case rather than being the guardian of ethics in the indirect tax administration. Whose interest the CBEC is trying to safeguard? And why? **Shouldn't our Parliamentarians look into such ugly administrative behaviour?**