

# Bitter exchanges over MCL probe

## Nalini Netto Had Told Industries ACS To Get Case Details From Accused

LaxmiPrasanna.Ajai  
@timesgroup.com

**Thiruvananthapuram:** The Malabar Cements case, which has led to a stand-off between senior bureaucrats and the government, has been a bone of contention between two senior officials too. The files accessed by TOI show that home and vigilance additional chief secretary (ACS) **Nalini Netto** and industries additional chief secretary **Paul Antony** had bitter exchanges over the vigilance probe that had led to the arrest of Malabar Cements former MD K Padmakumar.



At one point, Netto even had

### Malabar Cements official held for fraud

**Palakkad:** Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) DSP M Sukumaran arrested legal officer of the public sector Malabar Cements Ltd Prakash Joseph here on Monday in connection with the corruption in the purchase of fly ash by the company.

Instead of filing a complaint in a court at Tuticorin from where the fly ash was imported, the legal officer filed a case in the magistrate court in Palakkad to help the contractor, vigilance district chief M Sukumaran alleged. The officer had approached the high court for anticipatory bail. But the court asked him to appear before the vigilance inquiry officer who was directed to record his arrest and release him on bail. TNN

asked Antony get the details of the case from the accused. The rules of business and precedence mandate that the parent department should be informed about cases against any officials under it by the vigilance.

In the industries department file, no 322/H1/2016, it is seen that Antony has asked Netto

to share the material on the basis of which proceedings against Padmakumar were launched. But, the request was refused and Netto had replied (in the file) to 'get the details from the accused'. Antony, who was taken aback by the response, had reminded her of the convention that administrative depart-

ments should be informed. He had also noted in the file that vigilance proceedings against Padmakumar were totally unwarranted as per the facts.

In reply to Antony's concerns, Netto had noted that she had advised to get the information from the accused in good faith considering his urgency. She had said that investigation was on and the matter was before the court. She had added that "...the accused is at liberty to approach the investigating officer of the cases or the courts concerned".

Interestingly, Netto's stand contradicted the decision in a previous file (no 11014/B1/VIG/2015) in this regard, which was endorsed by her. The file, which had led to a flurry of inquiries against MCL officials, con-

cluded saying that there was no merit in the allegations levelled against the company management. Netto had written in the previous file that material obtained during the course of quick verification couldn't be used to register a vigilance case.

But, when the same issues came up before vigilance court as a fresh petition, the vigilance kept mum about the initial report and didn't produce it before the court. Industries department sources said suppression of facts by the vigilance had led to the ordering of a fresh probe by the court, resulting in the arrest Padmakumar.

Incidentally, law secretary BG Raveendranath had sounded similar to Netto's earlier version and found that there was no need to arrest the official.