Zero tolerance for custodial violence: Tamil Nadu DGP

Topics: Tamil Nadu Administration · UPSC Prelims · TNPSC · SSC · Current Affairs



News

At a press meet in Chennai on 18 November 2026, Tamil Nadu DGP Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal declared: "We have a policy of zero tolerance towards custodial violence." The statement came amid concern over eight custodial deaths reported (PTI) in the State in the past six months, and after recent incidents at police stations in Madurai and Thoothukudi districts. Balakrishnan (42), a lorry driver from Theni district held overnight for questioning at Chekkanoorani police station in Madurai district, was found hanging in the station restroom at about 6 am on 14 November and was declared dead at the Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai; police call it suicide, while his family alleges torture. Three police personnel, including the inspector, were suspended, the case was transferred to the CB-CID and a judicial inquiry was ordered. The DGP said CCTV footage exists for both incidents and strict action will follow if lapses are established. Six CCTV cameras have been installed in every police station, focusing on lock-ups, and everyone entering a station – complainant or accused – must be under CCTV coverage, he said.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Announced	18 November 2026, Chennai – DGP Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal
Policy	Zero tolerance for custodial violence
Trigger	Incidents in Madurai and Thoothukudi districts

Point	Details
Madurai case	Chekkanoorani station – death of Balakrishnan (42), 14 Nov 2026
Action	3 suspended; CB-CID; judicial inquiry
CCTV	6 cameras in every station; focus on lock-ups
BNSS 196(2)	Judicial Magistrate inquiry mandatory for custodial death
Sathankulam	June 2020 – Thoothukudi district; CBI probe

Background

- Article 21 guarantees life and personal liberty; the Supreme Court has repeatedly held that freedom from torture is part of it. Article 20(3) bars compelling an accused to be a witness against himself; Article 22 guarantees being told the grounds of arrest, access to a lawyer and production before a magistrate within 24 hours. Since the 44th Amendment, Articles 20 and 21 cannot be suspended even during an Emergency.
- In D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997) the Supreme Court laid down 11 mandatory requirements for arrest and detention – an arrest memo, informing a relative, a medical check every 48 hours and more. In Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh (2 December 2020) it ordered CCTV cameras with night vision and audio in all police stations and in offices of agencies such as the CBI, NIA and ED.
- Section 196(2) of the BNSS, 2023 (the old CrPC Section 176(1A)) makes an inquiry by a Judicial Magistrate mandatory when a person dies or disappears, or a woman is raped, in police custody. NHRC guidelines require custodial deaths to be reported to it within 24 hours. India signed the UN Convention against Torture (UNCAT) in 1997 but has not ratified it.

Tamil Nadu link: In June 2020, father and son P. Jayaraj and J. Bennix died after police custody at Sathankulam in Thoothukudi district, causing nationwide outrage; the CBI investigated the case. The current Chekkanoorani (Madurai) case is with the CB-CID.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

At a press meet in Chennai on 18 November 2026, Tamil Nadu DGP Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal declared: "We have a policy of zero tolerance towards custodial violence." The statement came amid concern over eight custodial deaths reported (PTI) in the State in the past six months, and after recent incidents at police stations in Madurai and Thoothukudi districts.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Announced: 18 November 2026, Chennai – DGP Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal; Policy: Zero tolerance for custodial violence; Trigger: Incidents in Madurai and Thoothukudi districts; Madurai case: Chekkanoorani station – death of Balakrishnan (42), 14 Nov 2026.

What is the background to this news?

Article 21 guarantees life and personal liberty; the Supreme Court has repeatedly held that freedom from torture is part of it. Article 20(3) bars compelling an accused to be a witness against himself; Article 22 guarantees being told the grounds of arrest, access to a lawyer and production before a magistrate within 24 hours.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which 1997 Supreme Court judgment laid down 11 mandatory requirements for arrest and detention?

A) D.K. Basu

B) Nilabati Behera

C) Hussainara Khatoon

D) Joginder Kumar

Answer: A – Explanation: D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal – arrest memo, informing a relative, a medical check every 48 hours.

2. Which BNSS section makes a Judicial Magistrate's inquiry mandatory for a death, disappearance or rape in police custody?

A) Section 35

B) Section 58

C) Section 187

D) Section 196

Answer: D – Explanation: Section 196(2) – the old CrPC 176(1A). Section 35 covers arrest without warrant; 58 bars detention beyond 24 hours.

3. Which Article says no person accused of an offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself?

A) Article 14

B) Article 20(3)

C) Article 22(1)

D) Article 32

Answer: B – Explanation: Article 20(3) – protection against self-incrimination; after the 44th Amendment, Articles 20 and 21 survive an Emergency.

4. In which 2020 case did the Supreme Court order CCTV cameras in all police stations and in CBI and NIA offices?

A) Arnesh Kumar

B) Lalita Kumari

C) Paramvir Singh Saini

D) K.S. Puttaswamy

Answer: C – Explanation: Paramvir Singh Saini v. Baljit Singh (2 Dec 2020). Arnesh Kumar (2014) curbed needless arrests; Lalita Kumari (2013) made FIRs mandatory.

5. Sathankulam, where father and son Jayaraj and Bennix died after police custody in 2020, is in which district?

A) Tirunelveli

B) Kanniyakumari

C) Thoothukudi

D) Virudhunagar

Answer: C – Explanation: Thoothukudi district – June 2020; the CBI investigated. It set off a national debate on custodial violence.

Sources: DT Next (PTI) – dtnext.in (18 Nov 2026); DT Next / TNM – Madurai case (14–15 Nov 2026); Supreme Court judgments; BNSS, 2023 – indiacode.nic.in. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.