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Kerala

Hurt, undefended Antony bats for himself in first press conference in over decade

In his 1st formal press meet in a decade, former CM expressed regret over police brutality in Muthanga & Sivagiri



Senior Congress leader A K Antony speaking at a press meet at Indira Bhavan in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday Photo | B P Deepu

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Dejected by his party colleagues' callousness in defending him when LDF members launched a blistering attack in the state assembly on police brutality in Sivagiri and Muthanga when he was at the helm of affairs, Congress veteran A K Antony on Wednesday stepped out to vindicate himself and his 1995-96 government.

Expressing "regret" over the two police actions, the former chief minister, however, maintained that those in power are forced to resort to such decisions at times. Antony was addressing his first formal press conference in over a decade.

“I have not been part of Kerala politics for the past 21 years. I had no plans for this interaction. But since I’ve been subjected to a one-sided attack, I thought it best to have my say. There is no one here to speak on such matters,” he said.

Antony urged the Pinarayi government to make public the report of the Bhaskaran Nambiar Commission, constituted by the E K Nayanar government to probe police action at Sivagiri. “The police action was necessitated by the reluctance of a section of seers who had lost power to the faction led by Swami Prakasananda in the election.

They did not agree to hand over power. The Kerala High Court had warned that contempt of court proceedings will be initiated (against the state government). The HC also directed the government to invoke provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code to make the transfer of power possible. That was when we resorted to the police action.

The government was not responsible for the unrest. Let the details of the commission report be made public so the people know the truth,” he said. Antony said he visited Sivagiri during his third stint as CM, and had expressed his regret for “the unfortunate incidents” that had transpired there.

“The police action in Muthanga happened after the state was warned of severe action by the Union ministry of forest and wildlife. It was a regretful development leading to the death of a policeman and a tribal youth. I had asked the then Vajpayee-led Union government to initiate a CBI inquiry and the report is with the state government. Let the government make it public,” he said. When asked about the Marad riots, he said there is an inquiry report on that too.

Curiously, throughout the press conference, Antony never criticised the current LDF government for “the series of police brutalities” raised by the Congress. However, Antony asserted that there is no crisis in the state Congress and none can weaken the party. “There are strong and very strong leaders in Kerala,” he said.

When asked about the developments surrounding the ‘A’ group, he said he had ended factional politics for more than 25 years ago.