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## ‘Dinakaran targeted for being a South Indian and a Dalit’

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**Chennai :** The controversy over Karnataka High Court Chief Justice P D Dinakaran’s elevation as a judge of the Supreme Court took another turn in Tamil Nadu, after a group of advocates and activists alleged that the campaign against him was instigated by casteist interests and individuals, particularly in the national capital.

When Justice Dinakaran’s name was announced as a judge of the Supreme Court, a group of advocates from the Chennai Bar forwarded a petition from a CPM-backed farmers’ association to a group of noted legal experts including Shanti Bhushan and Fali Nariman. The petition charged the judge of amassing property by abusing his powers.

However, coming to the rescue of the beleaguered judge, a few organisations like the Dravida Kazhagam and a section of advocates of the Madras High Court have counter-charged that he was a victim of a vilification campaign, for being “a South Indian and a Dalit”. “There is not an iota of doubt that Justice Dinakaran is a victim of a character assassination campaign by a few posing as farmers. The real agenda is, however, to prevent a member of a backward community from entering the ‘sanctum sanctorum’, now a monopoly of the upper castes,” said K Veeramani, general secretary of DK, the parent organisation of the DMK.

Criticising Shanti Bhushan’s reported comments about both the CJI and the judge in question being Dalits, Veeramani argued that it was the “unkindest and (most) unfair statement of all, as it was a unanimous decision taken by the Supreme Court collegium that comprises senior judges other than CJI K G Balakrishnan.”

Senior advocate of the Madras High Court, S Duraisamy, also sees a South Indian, Dalit twist behind the whole controversy. “First, there is a North-South issue — for those in North, we are all still ‘Madrasi’. And secondly, he is a

Scheduled Caste Christian,” alleged Duraisamy, adding that the property in question was acquired a long time ago.

The advocates and farmers’ association that raised the issue first have denied these allegations, pointing out that the only issue here was the veracity of certain specific, serious charges raised against someone occupying a high Constitutional position.

“The branding of Dalit, anti-Dalit, South Indian, anti-South Indian is just dirty politics employed to sidetrack the central issue: complaints about abuse of power by a judge. This is not even a wild accusation, as the charges here are very specific and detailed, including a property of several hundred acres. Why doesn’t the judge himself come out and say it is not his property,” asked advocate and political columnist V Krishna Ananth, one of the signatories of the original petition. He pointed out that the same group of advocates who were now being branded as anti-Dalits were behind most of the recent cases over Dalit rights including the “untouchability wall” in Uthapuram.

The state secretary of the CPM-backed farmers’ association, K Balakrishnan, backed the demand for a detailed probe into the issue before the judge was elevated to the apex court.

“If he owns only 40 acres as he claims, why is it that the property is inside a 440 acre fence at Kaverirajapuram village in Thiruvallur district? There is no motive behind raising this charge other than the demand for probity in public life. Apart from seeking an inquiry, there is little we can do against a person occupying a Constitutional position,” Balakrishnan said.

Those who raise the allegation have demanded a probe into the charges before Justice Dinakaran is chosen as an SC judge, as after the appointment, it would require a movement of a much larger scale to back the demand for impeachment. Veeramani, however, said there is no need to conduct such an inquiry. “The collegium is the last word in this matter, and it has already taken a decision. There is no need to delay the appointment,” he said.