

Villagers rise against Dinakaran

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The land-grabbing case against Karnataka High Court Chief Justice P. D. Dinakaran has taken a new turn.

Some residents of Kaverirajapuram village in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district have now approached the police, alleging the judge tried to destroy evidence of his offence.

The complaint, filed by 66 residents of the Dalit colony, states Dinakaran tried to get the boundary fences - a strong evidence of land possession - removed.

The judge is accused of encroaching upon nearly 550 acres of government land in Kaverirajapuram alone. He is also said to possess land in the nearby villages.

But the villagers said the police were yet to file an FIR on their complaint. "What is stopping them from registering a case and proceeding in the matter? What are they waiting for?" asked noted jurist NGR Prasad of the All India Lawyers' Union.

"A portion of the fencing has been removed. It must have been done on Monday night or early Tuesday," said A. R. Govindasamy, the village administrative officer. A team of revenue and police officers inspected the spot and found that fencing had been removed along 0.75 km.

"The fence is being removed by a person named Jaisudha who works at the Madras High Court.

For the last 10 days, he has been staying here along with many workers. We are living in fear," said V. M. Raman, the head of a local NGO. Raman is one of the complainants against Dinakaran.

The Dalits' defiance is surprising.

For even a month ago, they were scared to speak out. They had even shunned the media fearing they would miff their powerful 'enemy'. But they seem to have been emboldened after the district collector sent a report - on the allegations against Dinakaran - to the Supreme Court. Following the report, the decision to elevate Dinakaran to the Supreme Court had been deferred.

The collector, V. Palanikumar, had also written to Tamil Nadu's commissioner of land reforms to take possession of the land occupied by the judge.

In another interesting development, 11 non-Dalits from the village have submitted a memorandum to the collector, claiming ownership of a portion of the controversial land.

Furnishing documents to support their claim, they said most of the "encroached" property was originally owned by them, but later taken over by the government because of non- payment of land tax.

They said they were willing to clear the dues and take possession of the land that is rightfully theirs.

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