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Slum dwellers stage demonstration

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CHENNAI: The slum dwellers of Thedir Nagar staged a demonstration near Rajarathinam Stadium here on Wednesday, protesting against their ongoing eviction from the area. While there has been a brief lull in the activities due to the school examinations of the children in slums, it once again picked up in places like MGR Colony recently.

On Tuesday, one of the officials involved in the eviction drive at Thedir Nagar allegedly threatened the mother of a slum dweller Velankanni, who advised his neighbour not to take part in the photo sessions organised by the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board saying that it was the first step to throw them out of their houses. As they could not get hold of Velankanni, the officials vented their ire on his mother.

“Though Deputy Chief Minister M K Stalin and Managing Director of Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) T K Ramachandran maintain that there are no forced evictions happening, the ground reality is that the police and the slum board officials are threatening the slum dwellers to move out,”

Geetha Ramakrishnan of the Unorganised Workers Federation alleged.

The slums in the city are being removed with undemocratic practices by government bodies like PWD and TNSCB. Also, various projects involving construction of metro rail, coastal elevated expressway, road expansion works and Cooum restoration has seen slum dwellers driven from pillar to post. Around one lakh families are believed to be affected this way. So far, 15,000 families have lost their shelter and are waiting for the allotments, Geetha Ramakrishnan said.

Most of these people have been offered resettlement in colonies at Perumbakkam and Chemmenchery, both more than 30 km away from the city. But this does not go down well with the slum dwellers, most of whom earn their livelihood doing unorganised sector jobs in the city.

“The Tamil Nadu government is not using the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission funds to build the houses in the same places.

Instead, they use it to build houses at far off places,” said Geetha.