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Controversial wall near dalit colony demolished in Coimbatore

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COIMBATORE: In a swift move, the Coimbatore district administration pulled down a controversial wall that had been erected around a dalit colony in Nagarajapuram village in Veerakeralam town panchayat which was blocking the residents' access to the main road.

"A portion of the wall has been demolished. About 30 feet from the southwest end and 23 feet from the southeast end were demolished from the 500-metre-long and eight-foot-high wall," said Veerakeralam town panchayat executive officer R Duraimani. Because of the wall, around 2,000 dalits and tribals living in the locality have had to take a 1.5-km detour to reach the Thondamuthur-Coimbatore main road.

About 500 dalit families in the village had petitioned the district collector against what they called "an untouchability wall" raised by a non-dalit land owner. The dalits also claimed that the wall had been erected on the portion of a private land which had been reserved for public use. As the protests swelled, the tahsildar and executive officer of the town panchayat rushed to the village for inspection on Friday.

A day after the protest, the district collector ordered portions of the wall to be brought down in the presence of police officials around 10am on Saturday.

According to the executive officer, a real estate agent, Vijayakumar, bought the property adjacent to Nagarajapuram village and divided his 2.5-acre plot into 31 sites and received approval for construction from the local planning authority (LPA). However, he erected a wall outside the boundary of his compound on reserved panchayat site. "We have reopened the path and general public will have total access to the main road," added Duraimani.

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