

Recent Updates:

Three days after their village was cordoned off by a heavy police posse, the anti-nuclear agitators at Idinthakarai, where a sit-in has been going on for seven months, have geared up to face the challenge.

From the presence of a few dozen women agitators, the protest has grown into a full-blown battle of at least 5,000 people against the state. A few thousand more are waiting to plunge into a confrontation at the chime of the local church bell.

The protesters have taken precautions to prevent a police swoop on the agitation venue. The fishermen have stopped going into the sea since Monday. Young men have been posted as security guards outside the village. Roads have been dug in many places to obstruct vehicular movement. The Catholic Church is also active. Three priests heading the parishes of Idinthakarai, Koodankulam and Kootapuly have joined the protest.

"We will not run away even if there is a police action. Let the police beat or shoot us," says Fr Jayakumar of St Lourdes Mary Church, Idinthakarai.

If the police are awaiting a green signal from the government to arrest the leaders, the villagers have the chiming of church bell as signal to get into action. "On Wednesday, when a few police vehicles approached, the church bell brought out people in large numbers," says Raj Lion, a villager.

Since movement of provisions and supply of drinking water have been affected, the fishermen have resorted to the sea route. "Since many houses are running out of essential commodities, we have decided to cook food for all thrice a day. We ferry water pouches in boats from Kanyakumari," said Peter Milton, a second rung leader.

Thirunelveli district collector R Selvaraj denied that villagers' access to essential commodities was blocked.

Links: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/koodankulam-defying-jaya-protesters-gear-up-for-battle/926723/>

Statement of S P Udayakumar :

People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy coordinator S P Udayakumar's fast-unto-death entered the third day on Thursday. As more and more locals thronged Idinthakarai to express solidarity with the anti-nuclear activist protesting against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Project, the police blocked all roads to the fast venue.

Udayakumar, who is fasting along with his associate M Pushparaya, gives us a first-person account from Idinthakarai, Ground Zero of the protests against the nuclear power plant in Tamil Nadu.

The situation here is still grim. There are some 10,000 people from coastal and interior villages. Most of them are women including pregnant women and nursing women.

I saw many nursing women feeding their babies sweetened water as there was no milk coming to the village. More people are coming to the venue by boats and on foot, as the access roads are all blocked by the police. There is no bus service to this place. There is no sanitary complex and women bear the brunt of it. No public health official has ever come to help the people.

Some 15 of us have been on indefinite hunger strike and no doctor has come here to check our health. A local newspaper has reported on Thursday that we have all been eating heartily and pretending to be fasting. If this newspaper can prove that there is a trace of food in my or Pushparayan's stomach, we are ready to leave this protest.

On March 21, my mother received a phone call from an advocate by the name T Udayakumar and he claimed he was calling from the director general of police's office in Chennai. He asked my mother to tell me to leave the protest so that all the cases against me would be dropped and I would get whatever I ask for. My mother told him that I was not a man of that nature and ended the conversation.

That evening the Superintendent of Police of Tirunelveli District called me on my mobile and asked me to surrender so that people would not be affected. I told him that I was all ready for that but the people here at Idinthakarai also wanted to get arrested along with me and they would not let me go alone.

I proposed to the SP to send enough number of buses and two police officers so that there would not be any stampede or tussle and we all would board the buses peacefully and go wherever they wanted us to go. He would not accept that proposition and said in anger, "This is the last time I talk to you." There ended our conversation.

That night the police officer, who was on security duty at our SACCER (South Asian Community Centre For Educational Research) Matriculation School outside the Nagercoil town had received a phone call from the Kanyakumari District SP office to leave. Then a group of vandals, obviously with the blessings of the police, entered the school and destroyed it. The compound wall was completely demolished and the gate damaged.

They ransacked the school bus after tearing down the car shed's shutters. They had entered the KG classrooms and destroyed all the furniture. I do not understand why they punished my little children like this.

The vandals had entered our school library and destroyed all the 12 glass bookshelves and tables and threw away the books. My 250 children are all avid readers and have been using our library extensively. This reminds me of the burning of the public library at Jaffna a few years ago.

The governments and the police treat and speak of me as if I were terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden and our people some mindless terrorists. We resent this inhuman and brutal treatment. Electricity, water, milk and other essentials have been cut for two days; people cannot go out of and come into Idinthakarai as there is brutal police control. We are surrounded by police and I truly feel like I am at Mullivaikal (located in northern Sri Lanka where a hospital in the "safe zone" was allegedly bombed by the Lankan army).

We are a group of simple people who have been fighting non-violently and democratically against an untested foreign reactor with all kinds of problems and hiccups. We have not done any harm to anybody or anybody's property in our eight-month long struggle. The whole country is proud of our people.

The stalemate continues. There are protests happening all over the country and the state of Tamil Nadu. Whoever is farsighted to worry about the future of India's "ordinary citizens," our natural resources, the well-being of our progeny, the possibility of losing our freedom to the New Nuclear East India Companies and most importantly, the democratic fabric of our country support us. We thank them and you for standing with us. We are ready for any brutal police action but will not give up our nonviolent non-cooperation campaign.

Link :

<http://www.rediff.com/news/slide-show/slide-show-1-govt-treats-me-like-im-osama-knpp-activist-udayakumar/20120322.htm>