



Mannaar villagers protest against SL Navy occupying church lands

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Tamil villagers of Chi'ruth-thoappu on Thursday staged a peaceful protest against the Sri Lanka Navy occupation of 17 acres of land belonging to their church. The villagers demanded the Sri Lanka Navy base Gajaba to vacate the land. The protest comes as the SL State has recently taken a move to legally appropriate the lands after having it occupied for 10 years. The SL military occupying the land has also exploited the natural resources of the church the villagers complained. The church is situated along Mannaar – Thalaimannaar Road.

More than 2,000 coconut palms and more than 300 palmyra trees were in the lands that belongs to the church. Earlier, the income from these resources went to the villagers of Chu'ruththoappu.

Hundreds of these valuable trees have been cut and exploited by the SL Navy, the villagers complain.

Fr Anthony Victor Sosai, the vicar general of the Mannar diocese, Mr Martin Dias, the head of the Mannaar Piratheasa Chapai (PS), deputy head, TNA politicians and a large number of the public took part in the protest.

TNA parliamentarian Selvam Adaikkalanthan has sent an appeal on behalf of the villagers to SL Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, urging the SL defence establishment to release the lands belonging to the church.

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