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social untouchability

Blind home hits yet another road block

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI

April 12: The senior citizens in 'Lage Raho Munnabai' managed to reclaim their house after much song and dance, but these visually impaired youngsters, who are being prevented from moving into their brand new hostel and resource centre, Nethrodaya, have no patience for 'Gandhigiri', being faced with what they call 'social untouchability'.

The affluent residents of Mogappair West Garden, where the government had allotted six grounds for Nethrodaya, refuse to welcome this facility for blind students into their locality and have now obtained a stay order against granting the sewage and water connections for the building.

Mr C. Govindakrishnan, founder of Nethrodaya, alleges, "Our future neighbours are influential people! Retired judges, IAS officers and wealthy businessmen head the residents welfare associ-



Govindakrishnan and his wards wait to move into their new home.

PHOTO: DC

ation here. The only reason they gave us for creating obstacles in the construction of our home was that they did not want to start their day looking at blind people, as it is considered a 'bad omen'. Their children would be depressed, they say."

Mr Govindakrishnan, who is visually impaired himself, started Nethrodaya in 2002, to help underprivileged, blind children from the villages pursue their studies in mainstream colleges.

Overcoming all attempts to stop the construction,

they got the building permit in 2008. Ministers Paruthi Ilamvazhudi and Geetha Jeevan attended the formal inauguration of the building in March 2009.

"Finally, the residents association appealed to the Ambattur court last month and obtained a stay order that prevents us from availing of sewage and Metrowater connections, without which we cannot move in," says Govindakrishnan.

Nethrodaya is organising a protest against this on Tuesday.