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## New Witness Alleges Teenage Girl Was Murdered and Buried Without Post-Mortem in Dharmasthala

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The ongoing investigation into the Dharmasthala mass burial case has taken a new turn after a villager claimed that a teenage girl was murdered more than 15 years ago and buried without a post-mortem examination or police case.

Jayanth T, a resident of Ichlampady village, appeared before the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in Belthangady and gave a formal statement. He alleged that he witnessed the girl's death around 2009 or 2010 and identified the burial site in Dharmasthala village. He told investigators the body was already in a decomposed state and no legal procedures were followed before burial.

Jayanth, who is also known for his social activism, said he plans to provide additional evidence to the SIT and mentioned that there are other suspicious deaths in the area, including one involving a female relative. He said more witnesses are now willing to speak after the SIT's formation.

The claim adds to earlier testimony from a former sanitation worker who alleged that between 1995 and 2014 he was forced to bury bodies, mostly women and schoolgirls, under threats of violence. The SIT has so far recovered skeletal remains from one of the identified sites, which are undergoing forensic examination.

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao has assured that the state will provide full support for a transparent investigation and stressed that no one will be shielded from scrutiny. The SIT has also opened a field office in Mangaluru to assist with the inquiry.

The All India Democratic Women's Association has called for the SIT to be given full autonomy and urged that the investigation cover other unresolved cases involving women, including those of Padmalatha, Sowjanya, Vedavalli, and Yamuna.

Legal experts and activists have asked the SIT to widen its probe to examine other disappearances and suspicious deaths in Dharmasthala over the past four decades, as the latest allegation could become a crucial test of the investigation's depth and transparency.