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In his second brush with law, dog judged 'all right' by court

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WHEN he was produced before Purnea Executive Magistrate Court last Thursday, nine-year-old Chhotu could not say much in his defense - he's a dog. However, his mistress Rajkumari, 65, had plenty to say about the case that was lodged against her by her neighbour, Jagdish Das, under CrPc section 107 (disturbing the peace), alleging that she allowed her 'desi' dog to get away with "violent behaviour".

The elderly woman, who owns land spread over 4,000 sq ft, worth about Rs 10 lakh, in Purnea town, believes that the case is part of a scheme to take over her property. "I wonder how my neighbours can stoop low enough to blame a speechless pet to usurp my land," she says.

But speechless or not, executive magistrate Shabbir Hasan wanted the offending animal to be present during the proceedings, because he wished to "see the pet to have some idea of its behaviour". But even though the magistrate's first comment was "the dog looks all right", the case could not proceed because the complainant, Jagdish Das, failed to show up.

Now, however, Rajkumari may file a case as well, says her lawyer. Earlier, she had met Purnea SP Bachchu Singh Mina with her allegations about the land-grabbing conspiracy, but the counter FIR was not filed. She is also reported to have been roughed up by members of Das's family.

Incidentally, this is not the first time Chhotu has been in trouble with the law. Responding to a plea by one Ramswoorup Das, the SDO court had ordered Purnea municipal council to "kill the violent and mad dog" on 15 July 2003. However, Maneka Gandhi intervened, after which a five-member committee of prominent local veterinarians declared Chhotu "absolutely normal".