

Activists form forum against chamber's support to Sterlite

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Madurai: Activists in Madurai have formed a federation against the 'pro-corporate' stand of Tamil Nadu Chamber of Commerce and Industry and condemned it for supporting Sterlite industries.

Federation co-ordinator professor Vijaykumar and members of various parties including MDMK, CPI, VCK, SDPI and organisations such as PUCL, SOCO Trust and Citizens for Human Rights Movement told reporters on Thursday that the chamber comprised representatives of all political parties, people's movements, trade unions and democratic forums. Hence, a decision on issues like Sterlite should be taken carefully as it could be taken as the voice of others who were in their fold. They feared that the chamber of commerce might act in support of Sterlite rather than the welfare of the people of the region. It should have respected the feelings and sentiments of the people of Tamil Nadu and acted against the copper plant instead of issuing a statement in support of it. The Sterlite plant had caused the loss of 16 innocent lives and could not be further entertained in the region. He said that they had come to understand that the members of the chamber of commerce were divided in their views on supporting and opposing Sterlite. But the president of the chamber, N Jegatheesan, and senior president S Rethinavelu had acted arbitrarily through the statement and taken a pro-Sterlite stand.

He said that they would like to bring to the notice of the chamber the stand it took four years ago against the multinational firm Walmart when efforts were on to establish the supermarket chain in the region. But supporting Sterlite now went against its earlier policy to oppose any organisation which would affect the people of the state and country. The federation hoped that the chamber of commerce would change its views and support all people's movements which are opposing the National Green Tribunal's order and demanding the permanent closure of the Sterlite plant. "If the chamber continues to support the copper plant, we will organise protests against the the chamber too," they added.