

Bring Education under State list, says forum

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'Ensure 90% of Central government jobs in Tamil Nadu are reserved for Tamils'

Bring Education under the State list, treat the Sri Lankan Tamils fleeing the island nation as refugees and not as illegal migrants, grant tribal status to fishermen, ensure that 90% of the Central government jobs in Tamil Nadu were reserved for Tamils - these are some of the resolutions passed by People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) at a State-level Conference held in Madurai.

The two-day conference concluded on Sunday. Various topics on human rights were discussed at the conference.

Apart from these resolutions, the PUCL urged the government to ensure that the Sterlite Copper unit remained closed, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) be repealed, and Tamil be adopted as the official language in Madras High Court.

It also urged that proper legal aid should be provided to those people who were languishing in prisons for many years.

While the need to repeal UAPA and problems faced by women were discussed on day one of the conference, day two saw discussions on minority rights, Sri Lankan Tamils issue and fishermen-related issues.



Activist and Writer Kurumpanai Berlin spoke on various issues related to fishermen. He said that the rights of the fishermen should be protected. They were facing various problems and they were not being addressed. Certain recent amendments made to the existing rules went against the interests of fishermen. While it could pave the way for commercialisation, the fishermen could be evicted from the seashore. This would affect their very livelihood, he said.

Two Sri Lankan Tamil refugees - Durainesan and Kandaiah - spoke about issues related to Sri Lankan Tamils at the event. They urged the government to grant Indian citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamils who had fled the island nation.

MLA Abdul Samad spoke on minority rights. Executive Director of People's Watch Henri Tiphagne said human rights defenders were targeted and their voices stifled. They should be protected. Echoing his point, A. Mahaboob Batcha of SOCO Trust said an atmosphere of fear was being created to silence activists and this must not be allowed.