

Regarding need to grant citizenship or long-term visas to Sri Lankan Tamils residing in India for more than 30 years-Laid

DR. GANAPATHY RAJKUMAR P. (COIMBATORE): I would like to draw a kind of the Hon'ble Prime Minister regarding very pathetic conditions of Sri Lankan Tamils who have been residing in Tamil Nadu for a long time due to the ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka since 1983. The Tamil Nadu Government, with the support and approval of the Union Government, has been continuously providing shelter, livelihood assistance, education and medical facilities to Sri Lankan Tamils who have fled their homeland to save their lives on humanitarian basis. There are currently about 89,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living in Tamil Nadu and most of them have been here for more than 30 years. Of these, 40 percent were born on Indian soil lived in a state of legal uncertainty. They have not yet been able to obtain permanent legal solutions such as citizenship or long-term visas. To address these issues, the Tamil Nadu Government formed an advisory committee headed by the Minister of Non-resident Tamils Welfare to conduct a detailed study on the situation of Sri Lankan Tamils and recommended that Sri Lankan Tamils belonging to various categories, such as those born in India before 30.6.1987, those whose mother or father is an Indian, those married to an Indian, and those of Indian origin background, be eligible for citizenship opportunities. Further, the recent policy developments in the Immigration and Foreigners (Exclusion) Ordinance, reflect a humanitarian approach. So, the Union Government should provide a formal explanation that Sri Lankan Tamils who took refuge in India till 9.1.2015 should not be considered as illegal immigrants. This clarification will provide much-needed legal clarity and ensure a long-term legal solution for Sri Lankan Tamils. Furthermore, the previous executive order that prevented the processing of citizenship applications of Sri Lankan Tamils should be repealed. In this regard, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has written a letter to Prime Minister requesting him to take permanent measures to grant citizenship to Sri Lankan Tamils who have been residing in Tamil Nadu for a long time. Hence, I urge upon the Union Government to take necessary action on the letter written by Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to provide permanent legal solutions such as citizenship or long-term visas to Sri Lankan Tamils living in Tamil Nadu for more than 30 years.