

## Karunanidhi moves bill to change Tamil New Year day

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi Tuesday piloted a bill in the state assembly to change the Tamil New Year day from April 14 to the state's harvest festival Pongal, which falls Jan 14-15. The move has drawn much public ire.

Karunanidhi claimed that he had consulted various Tamil scholars and cultural experts before moving the 'Tamil Nadu Tamil New Year (Declaration) Bill 2008'.

None of the opposition parties has so far expressed any reservation about the move. But much of the public opinion was opposed to it.

'I suspect that those who endorsed the government's renaming quest must all be DMK supporters. If this government can do this, it can also announce new names for all the 12 months after Periyar, Anna, Stalin, Azhagiri, Kanimozhi and so on,' said eminent political commentator Cho S. Ramaswamy.

'Culture, in my opinion, cannot be ordered by law and therefore no regime has the power to do so,' he asserted.

V. Subramanian, who works for a private firm here, said: 'I would call it stupidity ...Though Dec 31 is the last day of every year, the accounting year ends on March 31 universally. Can anyone change these according to his or her whim and fancy?'

A priest at a Shiva temple termed it blasphemous.

'Our ancestors, who had the wherewithal to calculate the distance to the moon, sun and other planets when the world at large was yet to comprehend the value of the integer zero, have created a system that has stood the test of time. Attempting to alter it is like trying to fiddle with one's genes and parentage,' said a priest, declining to be named.

'Can anybody dare to change the Christian or Islamic calendars? And a political leader who has no beliefs in any religion has no locus standi to do so at all,' the priest said.

S. Bukhari, a Muslim scholar, averred that the government was acting beyond its known spheres of influence.

'This step doesn't make any sense to me. All those who subscribe to some religion or the other have their important days. For instance, in Islam, there is a particular period in a year that is observed as a period of fasting. It culminates in Id, which is determined by our Imams after sighting the moon. This has remained unchanged for centuries. Now that one government has attempted to change one calendar, where is the guarantee that others will not follow suit?' Bukhari questioned.

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