

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 10.10.2011 addressed to **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is reproduced below: -

"I would like to bring to your attention, various incidents of attacks and harassment of fishermen of Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy and Sri Lankan miscreants while fishing in the Palk Bay area, which is a matter of great concern to the Government of Tamil Nadu. As you are aware, the fishermen of Tamil Nadu have, from time immemorial, been fishing in the Palk Bay area in order to earn their livelihood. This Government accords the highest priority to protecting the fishing rights of its fishermen and ensuring their safety.

I wish to inform you with deep anguish that since this Government took charge in May, 2011, there have been as many as 16 incidents of attacks / harassment and apprehension of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Authorities. Four fishermen of Rameswaram were apprehended on 7.6.2011 by the Sri Lankan Authorities and they were released on 17.6.2011 only after the matter was brought by me to your kind notice through my D.O. Letter. Subsequently, again on 20.6.2011, 23 fishermen fishing in 5 boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Authorities. Again, I had to bring this to your kind attention through my letter dated 21.6.2011 in order to seek their release. There is a uniform pattern of either the personnel of the Sri Lankan Navy harassing / attacking the fishermen of Tamil Nadu fishing in the Palk Bay area or miscreants from Sri Lanka committing such acts. A number of Indian fishermen have been injured in such attacks and there have been a number of instances of theft of their fish catch, damage to their fishing nets and snatching away of the personal belongings of the fishermen. The Indian fishermen, especially belonging to Nagapattinam and Ramanathapuram Districts of Tamil Nadu, venture out to sea for fishing only with the constant fear of being attacked by the Sri Lankan Navy / Miscreants.

The Foreign Secretary, Government of India, Shri Ranjan Mathai called on me at Chennai on 8.10.2011. I brought the various incidents of attacks and harassment to his notice and requested him to take up the above issues with the Government of Sri Lanka who, on the one hand were participating in various

Indo-Sri Lanka Meetings in order to resolve the fishermen's problems and on the other were resorting to violence against our fishermen.

However, it is distressing to note that on the same day, i.e., on the evening of 8.10.2011, even before the Foreign Secretary reached Colombo, the Sri Lankan Navy again chased away our fishermen in the sea by firing in the air, off Mandapam coast of Ramanathapuram District and this incident has been widely reported in the print and electronic media.

I request your kind intervention in this issue of great concern and request the Government of India to convey its serious objection to the Sri Lankan Government with regard to the continuous incidents of harassment and attacks on the fishermen of Tamil Nadu who seek to eke out their living peacefully in their traditional areas of fishing in the Palk Bay area. I would also like to emphasize that the harassment of the fishermen of Tamil Nadu should be viewed as an act of provocation and aggression against India by Sri Lanka, similar to acts of firing across the borders of India by neighbours such as Pakistan and China. The attack on the fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu should be viewed as a national issue and not as an isolated problem of Tamil Nadu alone."

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