

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.letter dated 17.3.2012 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 17.3.2012 is reproduced below:

"I would like to bring to your kind attention, yet another incident of harassment of Tamil Nadu (Rameswaram) fishermen by Sri Lankan fishermen that occurred on 14.3.2012. Four fishermen of Rameswaram ventured into the sea for fishing in a mechanized fishing boat bearing registration No.TN/10/MFB/604 from Rameswaram fishing base on 14.3.2012 in their traditional fishing areas of the Palk Bay waters. Some Sri Lankan miscreants hurled petrol bombs on their boat. As a result, the boat of the Tamil Nadu fishermen sank in the sea. The four fishermen were rescued by another boat bearing registration No.TN/10/MFB/641, fishing in the nearby vicinity, and brought to shore on 15.3.2012 morning.

In this context, I wish to inform you that the incidents of harassment of Tamil Nadu fishermen continue unabated despite the assurances given by the Government of Sri Lanka, that Tamil Nadu fishermen will not be harassed. Many a time, Tamil Nadu fishermen who are harassed by Sri Lankan Navy/miscreants, do not even come forward to lodge a complaint, fearing a backlash from the Sri Lankan Navy.

The continued occurrence of the incidents of harassment also proves that the Government of Sri Lanka has not taken serious measures to curb the incidents of violence against Tamil Nadu fishermen. Sri Lankan miscreants watching the Indian (Tamil Nadu) fishermen being blatantly harassed by the Sri Lankan Naval personnel, get emboldened to attack Tamil Nadu fishermen as was done on 14.3.2012. These recurring attacks confirm my earlier statement that the Sri Lankan Government is adopting double standards with regard to fishermen's issues.

I am also deeply pained to point out that the issue of attacks on Tamil Nadu fishermen is not being treated as a National issue. No serious action is initiated whenever such attacks occur. It would not be out of context to further mention that in the recent 4th Joint Working Group Meeting held at Colombo, on 13-14th January 2012, it was reiterated that the highest priority is being accorded to the well being, safety and security of fishermen by both the countries, and it was agreed that use of force **could not be justified** under any circumstances. The assurances given remain only on paper and are not being honoured by the Sri Lankan Government. The recent incident of attack proves that all the discussions aimed at ensuring the safety of our fishermen while fishing is an exercise in futility.

I wish to reiterate that the consistent policy of my Government is to restore the fishing rights of the Indian fishermen in their traditional fishing areas in the Palk Bay waters where they have been traditionally fishing from time immemorial. I, therefore, request you to kindly take up the issue with the Sri Lankan Government and its President urgently, and ensure that no such brutal incidents occur in mid-sea again."

Issued by: Director, Information-Public Relations, Chennai.9

Date : 17.3.2012.