

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 1.9.2015 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

“The Sri Lankan Navy has yet again repeated its acts of harassment of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu. 16 fishermen in 3 fishing boats who set sail from Nagapattinam, Kottaipattinam and Mandapam fishing bases of Tamil Nadu on 29.8.2015 and 31.8.2015, were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy while peacefully pursuing their avocation in their traditional fishing waters in the early hours of 1.9.2015 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

The right to fish in the traditional waters of Palk Bay which has been historically enjoyed for several centuries by fishermen in Tamil Nadu is now being continuously infringed upon by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is widely accepted that fish and traditional fishermen know no boundaries. The IMBL itself is a matter sub judice in the Supreme Court of India. I have, in my personal capacity, challenged the unconstitutional ceding of Katchatheevu island under the 1974 and 1976 Agreements and the Government of Tamil Nadu has also impleaded itself in the case. May I request you to proactively initiate an appropriate set of actions that will bring about a permanent solution to this sensitive issue that plagues the livelihood of thousands of Tamil Nadu fishermen who fish in their traditional fishing grounds in the Palk Bay, facing the daily threat of abduction at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy?

Understanding the plight of our fishermen, my Government is implementing various innovative schemes to build up the capacity of our fishermen to venture deeper into Indian EEZ for fishing. I have recently launched a landmark scheme of providing Rs.30 lakhs subsidy assistance for procuring new Deep Sea Fishing Boats, the first of its kind in the country aimed at equipping our fishermen to enhance their deep sea fishing capabilities. State Government funds of Rs.51.3 crores have

been sanctioned as subsidy for building 171 Deep Sea Fishing Boats which will be directly benefiting 580 fishermen families. I have also sought assistance of Rs.1520 crores as a comprehensive financial package from the Government of India for diversification of fishing into India's EEZ and to relieve the pressure on the Palk Bay. I request you to direct the Ministry of Agriculture to expeditiously consider and approve the detailed proposal submitted by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Till a comprehensive solution to this vexatious issue is found, I request you to appropriately convey to the Sri Lankan authorities to instruct the Sri Lankan Navy to refrain from apprehending our fishermen and impounding their fishing boats. Sri Lanka's ongoing strategy of not releasing the apprehended boats and fishing gear even after releasing the fishermen has severely impaired the only means of livelihood of several fishermen families. This has caused great frustration amongst the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. Hence I urge you again to take up this issue with the Sri Lankan authorities at the highest level and ensure the immediate release of the fishermen, their boats and fishing gear.

There is high expectation in Tamil Nadu that your Government at the Centre would act decisively on this very sensitive issue, which involves the livelihood of lakhs of poor fishermen households in the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu.

I urge your personal intervention in this matter and request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities urgently and secure the immediate release of the 16 fishermen and 26 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody at the earliest."

Issued by: Director of Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9
Dated: 1.9.2015