

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 30.9.2015 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:

"This is to bring to your notice yet another incident wherein fishermen of Tamil Nadu have been apprehended and their right to fishing in their traditional waters has once again been infringed upon by the Sri Lankan Navy.

This is the third such apprehension within the span of a week. In this incident 7 fishermen in a motorised traditional fishing boat who set sail for gill net fishing from Therespuram fishing base of Thoothukudi District on 26.9.2015 were apprehended in the Gulf of Mannar area by the Sri Lankan Navy on 29.9.2015, and taken to Negombo, Sri Lanka.

In spite of the several steps being taken by my Government with an accommodative frame of mind to devise a permanent solution to this sensitive livelihood issue, the situation at sea remains precarious with the dubious actions of the Sri Lankan Government. I have been requesting the Government of India to wage a strong diplomatic offensive to uphold the rights and interests of our Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu. The Sri Lankan Government continues its series of arrests of our fishermen while fishing in their traditional waters. The Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the fishing boats, the sole source of livelihood of the poor fishermen, is further aggravating the situation. At present, 30 fishing boats continue in Sri Lankan custody and stand a risk of being damaged beyond repair with the impending advent of the monsoon.

I would like to reiterate that the Government of India should not treat the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India by me in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008, in which the Government of Tamil Nadu had also subsequently impleaded itself.

I request you to intervene personally in this issue and use all diplomatic channels to ensure that our fishermen are allowed to pursue their livelihood with freedom and peace of mind in their traditional waters. I once again call for your immediate intervention to secure the release of these 7 fishermen and their traditional craft along with the 21 fishermen and their 30 fishing boats which are already in Sri Lankan custody."
