

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 31.12.2015 of Selvi J Jayalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

“I write to bring to your notice yet another unfortunate incident of apprehension of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy on the eve of the New year. I understand that 3 mechanized fishing boats with 29 fishermen on board, went for fishing on 27.12.2015 from Akkaraipettai fishing base of Nagapattinam District and were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 31.12.2015. The boats and the fishermen have been taken to Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

The recurrent instances of attacks upon, and abductions of, our fishermen on the high seas in the Palk Bay continue unabated and are a matter of serious concern affecting the life and livelihood of Tamil Nadu fishermen on a daily basis. The Government of Tamil Nadu reiterates its commitment to the retrieval of Katchatheevu, which it considers to be an integral part of India. I also reiterate my request to the Government of India not to 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 very valid legal grounds by me, in my personal capacity, in the Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008 and subsequently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has also impleaded itself in this case.

I had requested as part of my Memoranda presented to you on 3.6.2014 and 7.8.2015, the sanction of a comprehensive Special Package for deep sea fishing and infrastructure at a cost of Rs.1520 crores and a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging. I request the Government of India to expedite the approval of the package.

I would like to remind you that prior to the most recent occurrence, 55 fishermen and 59 fishing boats are still in Sri Lankan custody. The fishing boats have been subjected to serious damages due to prolonged periods of disuse and the onslaught of the exceptionally strong monsoon this year. I request that the only means of livelihood of these fisherfolk is restored in a refurbished condition by the Government of India at the earliest. Further, it is very unfortunate that these innocent fishermen have continued to be incarcerated throughout the festive season which they were unable to spend with their families.

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 in a concrete and decisive manner so as to secure the immediate release of 84 Tamil fishermen and 62 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody including the 29 fishermen and their 3 fishing boats apprehended on 31.12.2015.

May I request you to take immediate action in this matter?”
