

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 4.1.2018 of Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi.

"At the outset, I thank you for securing the release of 79 Tamil Nadu fishermen from Sri Lankan custody, who have reached Tamil Nadu a few days ago. Unfortunately, the Sri Lankan Navy has apprehended 13 fishermen in 2 boats in the early hours of 4.1.2018. I would like to bring to your kind notice, the recent spate of apprehensions of our fishermen in their traditional fishing waters of Palk Bay in which 84 fishermen in 14 mechanised fishing boats were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in 8 incidents. These fishermen set sail for fishing from various fishing bases in Ramanathapuram, Pudukottai and Nagapattinam District of Tamil Nadu to eke out their livelihood. The Government of Tamil Nadu is extremely concerned about these frequent apprehensions, prolonged incarceration of our fishermen, detention of their fishing boats for long duration leading to its deterioration.

The fishermen who were apprehended since November, 2017 are still in Sri Lankan jails and their families back home are subjected to abject poverty. On the other hand, in spite of the continued persuasion by the Government of Tamil Nadu, the boats and fishing gear confiscated by Sri Lanka are deteriorating due to prolonged exposure to the inclement weather and lack of maintenance. This is fueling unrest among the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu.

You are aware that the constitutional validity of the Indo-SriLankan Agreement of 1974 has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008 by our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma. The Government of Tamil Nadu subsequently impleaded itself in this case. Hence, I request the Government of India not to treat the issue of IMBL as settled. The Government of Tamil Nadu is committed to take all possible steps with the support of Government of India to diversify trawl fishing in the Palk Bay to deep sea fishing as a way forward to put an end to the sufferings of our fishermen in the Palk Bay.

I strongly urge you to personally intervene and take up the issue of apprehension of Tamil Nadu fishermen in their traditional waters with the highest authorities in the Sri Lankan Government so as to ensure the safety and security of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu. I also request you to secure the immediate release of the remaining 84 fishermen and 159 fishing boats including the 13 fishermen and their 2 mechanized fishing boats which were apprehended on 4.1.2018, without any further delay".

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