

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 04.04.2015 addressed by Thiru O. Panneerselvam, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

---

I write to bring to your notice, yet another incident of apprehension of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu, in which 37 fishermen in 5 mechanised fishing boats who set sail from Nagapattinam fishing base of Nagapattinam District have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 3.4.2015. The boats and fishermen have been taken to Kangesanthurai in Sri Lanka and the fishermen have been remanded to judicial custody.

It is unfortunate that this incident has taken place immediately after the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of fishermen level talks which were recently held at Chennai on 24.3.2015. As you are aware, my revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, in view of the sentiments and desire of the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu to hold talks with the fishermen of Sri Lanka to sort out the day to day issues faced by them while fishing in the Palk Bay and in the interest of keeping a channel of communication open between the

fishermen communities of both countries, had commenced holding of fishermen level talks between fishermen associations of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. The 3<sup>rd</sup> round of fishermen level talks between the fishermen of both the countries which was held on 24.3.2015 went on smoothly and in a conducive atmosphere. The fishermen on both sides were confident that the talks would give a positive momentum towards finding a permanent solution to their fishing issues.

At a time when we were hopeful that a pragmatic and permanent solution to this issue would emerge as a result of the fishermen level talks, it is disconcerting to read media reports quoting senior Sri Lankan leaders, stating inter alia that the Sri Lankan Navy would be directed to apprehend Indian fishermen fishing in their traditional fishing waters of the Palk Bay. We are concerned that this most recent act of the Sri Lankan Navy will be seen in the light of these statements and will again heighten the anxiety and unrest in the minds of our fishermen and vitiate the atmosphere of goodwill which was generated as a result of the fishermen level talks. A firm, clear, unequivocal and unambiguous message should be sent out by the Government of India to the Sri

Lankan side to ensure that these trends are reversed and the livelihood of the poor and innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu who are engaged in their traditional occupation and fish in their traditional waters are protected.

The statements and the most recent incident yet again highlight the importance of retrieving the Katchatheevu islet and abrogation of the 1974 and 1976 agreements thereby restoring the traditional and historical fishing grounds of the Palk Bay to the Tamil Nadu fishermen. The ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her personal capacity and also by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the Supreme Court of India.

You are also aware that under the guidance of our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, the Government of Tamil Nadu has the greatest concern for the conservation of the marine ecosystem and does not support unsustainable practices. We have taken a number of steps to minimize the pressure on the marine ecosystem. Our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had requested in the Memorandum presented to you on 3.6.2014, for

sanction of a financial package of Rs.1520 crores and recurring grant of Rs.10 crores which would go a long way in improving the socio economic status of the fishermen from the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu. I strongly urge you to direct the concerned Ministries to sanction the package at the earliest. Early action on the permanent solution for the Katchatheevu problem and long term diversification measures must be initiated.

I request that this latest incident of apprehension of our fishermen be taken up at the highest diplomatic level. It should be ensured that this unfortunate incident receives the much needed priority attention that it deserves and the Government of India should take necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of our fishermen. The Government of India should secure the immediate release of the 37 fishermen and the 18 boats in Sri Lankan custody, including the 5 mechanised boats which were apprehended on 3.4.2015.

**Issued By: DIPR, Secretariat, Chennai 9**