

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 5.1.2017 of **Thiru O. Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India :-

This is to bring to your notice, an incident of apprehension of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that, 10 fishermen in two mechanised fishing boats who set sail from Jegathapattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the evening hours of 4.1.2017. The fishermen have been remanded to custody.

It is unfortunate that this incident has taken place at a time when our fishermen were hopeful that a pragmatic and permanent solution to this issue would emerge from the Ministerial level meeting which took place at Colombo on 2.1.2017. 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 thereby clearly signal that the Government of India is firmly committed to protect the livelihood of the poor and innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu who are engaged in their traditional occupation and fishing in their traditional waters.

The Government of Tamil Nadu strongly reiterates the need to restore the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen in the Palk Bay by annulling the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement of 1974 as the constitutional validity of this agreement 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.

There are as on date 116 boats that are yet to be released and remain precariously perched on the Sri Lankan shores. The Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the boats of our fishermen is causing great frustration amongst the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. Without

their livelihood base, these fishermen are in a state of despondency. Though the Government of Sri Lanka agreed to consider the release of the boats, no decision has been taken in this regard. I request the Government of India to take up this serious issue with the highest authorities of the Sri Lankan Government and ensure the immediate release of the boats which continue to suffer great damage.

I had in the Memorandum presented to you on 19.12.2016, reiterated the request of our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma for sanction of a financial package of Rs.1650 crores including a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores which would go a long way in improving the socio-economic status of the fishermen from the coastal districts of Palk Bay in Tamil Nadu. It is requested that the concerned Ministries may suitably be directed to sanction the package at the earliest.

The Government of Tamil Nadu strongly urges that such incidents of apprehension of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy be taken up strongly at the highest diplomatic level and the Government of India should take necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of our fishermen. The Government of India is also requested to secure the immediate release of 61 fishermen and 116 fishing boats including the 10 fishermen and their two mechanized fishing boats apprehended on 4.1.2017 without any delay.

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