

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 6.6.2013 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

"I wish to draw your attention to yet another outrageous incident of capture and arrest of 49 innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu who ventured out in 10 mechanised boats on 5.6.2013 for eking out their livelihood on the high seas. It is reported that 24 fishermen belonging to Rameswaram set out in 5 boats and they have been illegally abducted by the Sri Lankan Navy and taken away to Mannar in Sri Lanka where they are being held in custody. Further, another batch of 5 boats from Rameswaram with 25 fishermen on board have been captured in the high seas and detained by the Sri Lankan Navy at Kayts Island. Further, it was also shocking to learn that one boat, TN 10/MFB/1004 which was chased away ruthlessly by the Sri Lankan Navy actually capsized and five fishermen on board were rescued by their fellow fishermen and reached our shores safely.

I have repeatedly written to you about the travails of innocent Tamil Nadu fishermen who face harassment, abduction and assault at the hands of the Sri Lankan Navy, which continues with its menacing and predatory acts in the face of pusillanimous responses and apathy by the Government of India. Things have come to such a pass that fishermen from Tamil Nadu are unable to access their traditional fishing waters for fear of being kidnapped or attacked by the Sri Lankan Navy. The entire fishermen community in Tamil Nadu is agitated, incensed and in a volatile mood.

Despite my repeated protests, the Government of India has taken no firm stance in the matter and has exerted little or no diplomatic pressure on Sri Lanka to bring about a permanent solution to the problem of harassment and arrests of innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu.

I request you to instruct the Ministry of External Affairs to immediately summon the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in New Delhi and lodge the Government of India's strong protest against this latest act of illegal and highhanded abduction of such a large number of innocent fishermen in the Palk Bay by the Sri Lankan Navy. The Government of India should convey in no uncertain terms its indignation at this latest act of abduction of innocent Indian fishermen and ensure that the Sri Lankan Navy is restrained from making such unprovoked assaults on innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu.

May I also request you to firmly instruct our diplomats in Colombo to immediately take up the matter with the Government of Sri Lanka and secure the immediate release of the 49 fishermen and their boats?

I solicit your immediate action in the matter."

Issued by: Director, Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9.
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