

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 5.7.2016 of **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India :-

"I am constrained to write to you yet again to bring to your notice two more incidents of apprehension of innocent Indian fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that 6 fishermen in their traditional fishing boat who set sail from Pamban fishing base in Ramanathapuram District have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 4.7.2016 and taken to Kalpitiya, Sri Lanka. In yet another incident, 2 boats from Nagapattinam District with 17 fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 5.7.2016 and have been taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

The historic rights of our fishermen to fish in the traditional waters of the Palk Bay are being continuously denied and the root cause of the problem is the unconstitutional ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka under the Indo-Sri Lankan agreements of 1974 and 1976. I had in my personal capacity challenged the legal validity of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreements and the Government of Tamil Nadu subsequently impleaded itself in this case. It is the stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu that the International Maritime Boundary line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka cannot be treated as settled as the matter is sub-judice. I reiterate that only the retrieval of Katchatheevu will ensure the restoration of the peaceful pursuit of their traditional livelihood by our fishermen in the Palk Bay.

The long period of impoundment and disuse and the precarious berthing of the seized fishing craft render them unusable and greatly damage the only means of livelihood of our poor fishermen. I request the Government of India to impress upon the Sri Lankan Government to immediately release the 95 fishing boats of our fishermen already in custody.

I once again seek your urgent directions to the Ministry of External Affairs to initiate earnest efforts to find a permanent and pragmatic solution to this livelihood issue of our fishermen. I request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to secure the immediate release of our 57 fishermen and 98 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody, including the 23 fishermen and their 3 fishing boats apprehended on 4.7.2016 and 5.7.2016."

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