

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 7.2.2017 of **Thiru O.Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi.

"I write to bring to your notice yet another incident of apprehension of 10 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy on 7.2.2017. It has been reported that 7 fishermen onboard a mechanised fishing boat set out for fishing from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District. The boat's engine reportedly developed a technical snag and the boat was drifting. Three fishermen from another fishing boat boarded the stricken boat to rectify the engine defect, when all ten of them were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 7.2.2017 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

This is an instance where our fishermen on a boat in distress have been apprehended. This is an unacceptable and inhumane act. Under the internationally accepted laws of the sea, such vessels in distress have to be treated in a humanitarian fashion. I reiterate the Government of Tamil Nadu's consistent stand that our fishermen should be allowed to pursue their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay. It is also the consistent stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu that the Government of India should not treat the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements have been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, in her personal capacity, in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008 and subsequently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has also impleaded itself in this case.

I take this opportunity to remind you that there are already 119 fishing boats belonging to Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan custody. Long periods of disuse and the onslaught of the monsoon

during the last two years would have inflicted severe damages to the boats and equipment. The poor fishermen who are currently suffering a temporary loss of livelihood, would now be subjected to a huge permanent livelihood loss due to the damage to the fishing boats. I reiterate my request that their only means of livelihood, the boats, are released and restored in a refurbished condition by the Government of India at the earliest.

I request the Government of India to act decisively in light of the sensitive nature of this issue and put in place appropriate mechanisms to bring about an end to the sufferings of our fishermen. I also request you to secure the immediate release of 35 fishermen and 120 fishing boats. In particular, the 10 fishermen on board the mechanised fishing boat in distress apprehended on 7.2.2017 must be released without filing of any cases and going through a long winded legal process, on humanitarian grounds.”

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

Date : 7.2.2017