

Letter addressed by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to the
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India

Date : 08.03.2008

Dear PM,

I am writing this letter to bring to your kind notice the anguish caused to me as well as the people of Tamil Nadu by the two shooting incidents which took place near Katchathivu on 5.3.08 wherein one fisherman by name Christy succumbed to his injuries and another fisherman , N. Francis is recovering from severe bullet injury.

While local enquiries from the District of Ramanathapuram revealed that the boats were fired upon by Sri Lankan Navy near Katchathivu, the Sri Lankan Government has denied the same. However, what is true is that the incidents have taken place and we have lost a precious life.

As you are aware, in the past few months a number of incidents have been taking place in the International waters between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. Further, I would also add that there is yet another dimension to the problem which is caused by a certain local Sri Lankan organization called "*Langai Vadaku Pradesa Padhukappu Kazhagam*" who have threatened the Tamil Nadu fishermen in the last few months with dire consequences if in case the Tamil Nadu fishermen venture into Sri Lankan waters.

The frequent firing incidents have created a sense of insecurity and unrest among the fishermen in Tamil nadu and are causing lot of concern. Even yesterday, the Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 62 fishermen of Tamil Nadu in the mid-sea, causing anxiety and tension among the fishermen. It is necessary to contain the arbitrary activities of the Sri Lankan Navy. The protests and agitations staged

by the fishermen of Tamil Nadu against the firing incidents are some times becoming unmanageable and creating law and order problems.

As the situation is becoming alarming day by day and unprovoked attacks are taking place often, I would request the Coast Guards and the Navy to be instructed to be more vigilant and carry out effective patrolling and surveillance at sea. The sea surveillance also needs to be adequately strengthened.

I would therefore once again like to draw your attention to the D.O.letter from me dated 30.3.2007 wherein I had requested for

(i) enhanced presence of Coast Guard and Navy for intensive sea and air patrolling with additional man power, and state-of the art Vessels and Aircrafts, and

(ii) the entire sea patrolling of Tamil Nadu Coast to be brought under one single command irrespective of East or West Sea Coast, as presently there is some confusion in this matter.

I had also listed certain safety systems like (i) stationing an OPV with Helicopter to be stationed at Thoothukudi under the exclusive control of Eastern Command of the Coast Guard, (ii) providing funding for a seamless communication developed by the State Fisheries department, (iii) establishing and equipping with state of the art patrol and interceptive boats, a Coast Guard Station at Kanyakumari and bringing the entire coast guard command, to be put in position without any delay to substantially increase the security of the Tamil Nadu coastline and IMBL adjoining it as well as the safety of the fishermen.

In view of the incidents which have taken place in this area, it is imperative that the Defence Ministry gives adequate attention to my suggestions and ensures the protection of the Indian Maritime Boundary, as well as the Fishermen who operate in this area.

Needless to add that we have repeatedly instructed our fishermen from crossing the IMBL but the fishermen are guided by the availability of fish which, as you know, is available in plenty near Katchathivu - which has from time immemorial been the traditional fishing ground of fishermen of Tamil Nadu. However my request is that even in cases where the fishermen have strayed into Sri Lankan waters, the men should be treated as per International Laws and norms and not through violence and bullets.

I shall be grateful if the requests of the State Government are implemented on a war footing. Also the concern and sentiments of the State Government may be conveyed to Sri Lankan Government by the External Affairs Ministry with a request to ensure humanitarian treatment to the fishermen even if they have inadvertently strayed into their waters.

Yours sincerely,

Sd/-

(M. KARUNANIDHI)

To

Dr Manmohan Singh,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,
New Delhi.