

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 8.8.2017 of **Thiru. Edappadi K. Palaniswami**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"I wish to bring your kind attention to yet another instance of high-handedness of Sri Lankan Navy against the Indian fishermen pursuing their peaceful fishing operations in their traditional Palk Bay fishing waters. In a series of incidents that occurred on the night of 7.8.2017, the Sri Lankan Navy terrorized our fishermen by ramming their boats with armoured Naval vessels and en masse arrested 49 fishermen in 12 fishing boats.

I am informed that 41 fishermen onboard 10 mechanised fishing boats from Pudukkottai District of Tamil Nadu, came under attack of the Sri Lankan Navy in the late hours of 7.8.2017, while they were engaged in fishing in their traditional fishing waters. A Sri Lankan Naval vessel reportedly hit two fishing boats and 7 fishermen onboard the two fishing boats were thrown into the sea. The Sri Lankan Navy subsequently apprehended 10 boats and 41 fishermen, including the 7 fishermen who were thrown into the sea.

In another incident, 8 fishermen in two mechanised fishing boats, who set sail for fishing from Mandapam fishing base of Ramanathapuram District on 7.8.2017, were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 8.8.2017.

I have frequently brought to your kind notice the repeated instances of abduction and apprehension of innocent Indian fishermen belonging to the coastal Districts of Tamil Nadu bordering the Palk Bay by the Sri Lankan Navy. The Sri Lankan Navy's completely unwarranted display of military might against poor innocent Indian fishermen ramming their flimsy boats with its Naval vessels and endangering lives of non-combatant is totally unacceptable. **The attack on and apprehension of our fishermen en masse has come as rude shock at a time when the process of conversion of trawling boats to long-liners has been kick-started in your presence at Rameswaram recently.** It is a sharp escalation and a needless provocation. The attack and apprehensions clearly point to the scant regard on the Sri Lankan side for the efforts by the Government of India and Government of Tamil Nadu to resolve the fishing issues peacefully. This incident further underscores what my late leader Hon'ble Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had often stated that only 'the retrieval of Katchatheevu' can bring a lasting solution to this vexatious issue.

I already had sought that a strong diplomatic offensive should be launched to prevent the recurrence of incidents of attacks on and arrests of our fishermen and apprehension of their boats in order to pave the way for finding solution through a peaceful dialogue process.

I sincerely urge you to take up this matter personally with the highest authorities in Sri Lanka to register our strongest disapproval of the mis-adventure of the Sri Lankan Navy in the mid-seas gravely endangering the lives of our fishermen. I also request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to secure the immediate release of 64 fishermen and 125 boats including the 49 fishermen and their 12 mechanised fishing boats apprehended in the early hours of 8.8.2017.

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