

PRESS RELEASE

Thiru Ranjan Mathai, Foreign Secretary, Government of India called on Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu today (8.10.2011) at the Secretariat on his way to Colombo.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa recapitulated the incidents of apprehension and harassment of fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu in the last five months after the present Government took over. The Hon'ble Chief Minister recalled the incidents of apprehension of the 4 fishermen who were stranded in the Sri Lankan coast on 2.6.2011; the apprehension of 23 fishermen and 5 mechanised fishing boats on 20.6.2011; seizure of a Vallam and apprehension of 14 fishermen on 4.7.2011. She also recalled several incidents of harassment of fishermen from Tamil Nadu in the Palk Bay by the Sri Lankan Navy. She also stated that there have been 16 such incidents since May this year.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa emphasized that the incidents of apprehension and assault of the fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy should be viewed not as an assault on Tamil fishermen but as an assault on Indian citizens and should be viewed as an act of provocation and aggression against India by Sri Lanka, similar to firing across the borders of India by neighbours such as Pakistan and China. The attack on the fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu should be viewed as a national issue and not as an isolated problem of Tamil Nadu alone.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa also observed that most of the incidents of apprehension and harassment occurred in the sea off Ramanathapuram and Nagapattinam Districts of Tamil Nadu and that the Sri Lankan miscreants / fishermen have in the past one month, taken away fishing implements and fish catches from the boats of Tamil Nadu (Indian) fishermen, especially off the coast of Nagapattinam District. As the boats sailing out of Sri Lanka are under the close surveillance of the Sri Lankan Navy, there is every likelihood that these incidents took place with the knowledge of the Sri Lankan Navy.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister also informed the Foreign Secretary about the apprehensions of the Indian fishermen that the miscreants who threatened them may actually be personnel of the Sri Lankan Navy in the guise of fishermen. The apprehensions assume significance due to the fact that the Sri Lankan miscreants who attacked the Tamil Nadu fishermen were in small boats which are incapable of carrying enough diesel to take them to long distances.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa emphasized that the Foreign Secretary should take up this matter with the Sri Lankan Government during his visit to Colombo.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi J Jayalalithaa also suggested that the Indian fishermen should be allowed to enjoy their traditional rights of fishing around Katchatheevu and that this issue may be taken up with the Sri Lankan Government.

She also said that the Sri Lankan Tamils living in the camps should be resettled in their original places and that this should also be taken up with the Sri Lankan President and the Government of Sri Lanka.

Thiru H.V. Shringla, Joint Secretary (BSM), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Thiru Sanjeev Singla, Director, FSO, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Thiru Debendranath Sarangi, Chief Secretary to Government of Tamil Nadu were present during the meeting.

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