

Press Release

Text of the D.O. letter dt.8.10.2014 addressed by **Thiru O.Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi is reproduced below:

"This is to bring to your notice, one more incident, wherein 4 fishermen in a fishing boat bearing registration No. IND-TN-10-MM-468 who set sail from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District on 6.10.2014 have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. The boat drifted to Delft Island, Sri Lanka and was grounded due to an engine snag following which the 4 fishermen were arrested and handed over to Delft Island Police, by the Sri Lankan Navy.

This new trend of apprehending fishermen in boats that develop mechanical snag by the Sri Lankan Navy is a matter of concern for my Government. An immediate intervention at the highest level is sought to arrest this new trend.

I would like to remind you that 20 fishermen and 75 boats of the fishermen of Tamil Nadu continue to be in Sri Lankan custody. The Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the boats of our fishermen is causing great frustration amongst the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. Without their livelihood base, these fishermen are in a state of despondency. I urge you to take this up with the highest authorities of the Sri Lankan Government and ensure the immediate release of the precariously berthed boats as the impending monsoon poses grave danger to them.

Nearly 10 lakh fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu depend on marine fishing as their only source of livelihood. As our leader, Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had indicated earlier, the Government of Tamil Nadu under her leadership had taken a number of steps towards diversification of their avocation to minimize the pressure on the marine ecosystem. A two pronged approach is necessary at this juncture to solve this chronic problem. One is the financial package that our Leader had requested from the Central Government, which would go a long way in improving the socio economic status of the fishermen. The second is the abrogation of the 1974 and 1976 agreements and restoration of the traditional and historical fishing grounds of the Palk Bay and Katchatheevu which has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by our Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her personal capacity and also by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. Denying our fishermen, the right to peaceful fishing in their traditional waters of the Palk Bay to which they have a historical claim is causing

considerable angst amongst the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu. I request your personal intervention to immediately resolve this long pending issue by retrieving Katchatheevu and restoring the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen as has been demanded by our beloved leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma.

May I request you to instruct the concerned Ministry to take urgent steps to secure the immediate release of 24 fishermen who are languishing in Sri Lankan jails and the release of 75 boats in Sri Lankan custody?"

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

Dated: 8.10.2014