

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 9.9.2014 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

“This is to bring to your notice a new trend that has emerged in the Sri Lankan Navy's tactics of harassing and intimidating Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu fishing in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay. Of late, the Sri Lankan Navy is targeting fishing boats stranded in mid-sea due to adverse weather conditions or mechanical failure as well as fishing boats that go to the rescue of such fellow fishermen in distress. These boats in distress and Indian fishermen on board are being apprehended and remanded to custody in Sri Lanka. This is a totally inhumane approach and completely against the ethics of maritime search and rescue operations.

In the latest episode one mechanised fishing boat, belonging to Ramanathapuram District with 6 fishermen who set sail for fishing from Rameswaram fishing base on 8.9.2014 and was drifting due to a mechanical snag, has been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 9.9.2014. I learn that the boat and fishermen have been taken to Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka. Even in the last two instances on 1.9.2014 and 2.9.2014, 15 Indian fishermen were apprehended from boats which were in distress in mid-sea. Two boats sank and the boat which went to their rescue was captured. The 15 fishermen and one boat continue to be in Sri Lankan custody.

I wish to reiterate that the Sri Lankan strategy of keeping the apprehended fishing boats of our fishermen in custody has snatched away the source of meagre livelihood of the poor fishermen and their families and is also fuelling despondency and great unrest amongst the fishermen. The 63 boats of Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan custody are deteriorating due to lack of maintenance on a daily basis. With the North East Monsoon due to arrive shortly, these precariously berthed impounded boats will suffer irreparable damage if not released immediately.

These incidents once again highlight the importance of retrieving the Katchatheevu islet. I had challenged the constitutionality of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreements of 1974 and 1976 which unilaterally ceded the islet of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P.(Civil) No. 561/2008, and sought to declare the 1974 and 1976 Agreements as null and void. The stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu is that Katchatheevu has always been a part of India, geographically, culturally and historically. The permanent solution to this vexatious issue lies in retrieving Indian sovereignty over Katchatheevu and in recognizing the rights of our fishermen to fish in their traditional fishing grounds of the Palk Bay.

May I exhort you to immediately take up the matter with the Sri Lankan Government and arrange for the immediate release of all the 21 fishermen of Tamil Nadu now in Sri Lankan custody including the 6 fishermen apprehended today (9.9.2014) and the immediate release of the 64 impounded boats? I hope the Government of India under your leadership would find a decisive and permanent solution to this sensitive livelihood issue of our fishermen. “

**Issued by: Director of Information and Public Relations,
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Dated: 9.9.2014.