

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 10.12.2014 addressed by Thiru O. Panneerselvam, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

"I write to bring to your kind notice, yet another incident, in which 14 fishermen in two fishing boats bearing registration Nos. IND-TN-06-MM-2524 and IND-TN-06-MM-567 who set sail from Nagapattinam fishing base of Nagapattinam District on 9.12.2014 have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. Another 14 Tamil Nadu fishermen who were on board a fishing boat from Karaikal base of Pudhucherry were also apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. The boats and fishermen have been taken to Kangesanthurai in Sri Lanka and are in custody.

It is unfortunate that this incident has taken place immediately after the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in an unanimous Resolution passed on 5.12.2014, urged the Central Government to secure the immediate release of 38 Tamil Nadu fishermen languishing in Sri Lankan Jails as well as to take necessary action for the release of 79 fishing boats which have been seized by the Sri Lankan authorities. The livelihood of our fishermen is being threatened by the Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing their boats. Many of these boats have been in custody and unused and without any maintenance for over 6 months, causing huge damage and loss. My Beloved Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had written to you several times indicating that the Sri Lankan Government has been pursuing a devious and sinister strategy of not releasing the apprehended fishing boats in successive incidents where Indian fishermen are harassed and arrested while pursuing their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay.

At this juncture, I would like to point out that the Chief Secretary, Government of Tamil Nadu in his letter dated 6.12.2014, had replied to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India stating that if the Sri Lankan side initiates the release of all the Tamil Nadu fishermen along with their fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody, the Government of Tamil Nadu will also initiate necessary steps for the release of the Sri Lankan fishermen along with their fishing boats. But this latest episode of arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen and their boats raises apprehensions about the true intention of the Sri Lankan Government regarding the release of Tamil Nadu fishermen and their boats.

The Government of Tamil Nadu reiterates its firm commitment to the restoration of the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen in the Palk Bay and the retrieval of Katchatheevu which had been an integral part of India since time immemorial. The Government of India should also not treat the

International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements have been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by the Government of Tamil Nadu and my Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her personal capacity in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

I also wish to recall that my Beloved Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had already requested a Comprehensive Special Package for Diversification of Fisheries at a cost of Rs.1520 crores and a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging as part of the Memorandum presented to you on 3rd June, 2014. An early approval of the Comprehensive Special Package for Diversification of Fisheries by Government of India would go a long way in finding a long term solution to this sensitive issue.

I, therefore, request your urgent intervention for finding a long term solution to this issue which includes the retrieval of Katchatheevu and sanction of the requisite financial package. I also urge you to secure the immediate release of the 66 fishermen who are in the custody of the Sri Lankan authorities as well as 81 fishing boats, including the 28 fishermen and two fishing boats apprehended on 9.12.2014."

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