

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 11.10.2015 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: -

"I am constrained to write to you yet again to bring to your direct attention the fifth consecutive unprovoked instance of arrest and detention of innocent and poor fishermen from Tamil Nadu while fishing in their traditional fishing waters off the coast of Southern Tamil Nadu. It is with anguish that I have to point out that these five instances have taken place within the span of a few weeks.

In the latest incident, 19 fishermen along with their 2 boats from Tamil Nadu who had set out for fishing from Nagapattinam fishing base in Nagapattinam District, were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 10.10.2015 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka. With this incident, the number of fishermen currently in Sri Lankan custody is 54. In addition totally 34 boats are also in the custody of Sri Lankan authorities. Despite my repeated requests to you to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities and ensure the early release of the fishermen and their boats, there has been little response and the fishermen have suffered prolonged detention.

I have repeatedly and emphatically brought to your notice Tamil Nadu's consistent stance about the unconstitutionality of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreements of 1974 and 1976 and the ceding of the Katchatheevu islet, which is the root cause of the problem. Our fishermen are being denied the right to peaceful fishing in their traditional waters of the Palk Bay to which they have a historical claim. The denial of this right and the prolonged incarceration of

our fishermen in Sri Lankan jails after being unlawfully apprehended while rightfully engaging in their livelihood activity of fishing in their traditional waters is causing considerable misery and frustration amongst the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu. I have already brought to your notice the damage that fishing boats and fishing gear suffer due to prolonged disuse while they are impounded by the Sri Lankan authorities and the resultant adverse impact on livelihood of fishing families in Tamil Nadu.

We are still awaiting the much anticipated strong and sustained diplomatic initiative to resolve the vexatious issue of ensuring safety, security and livelihood of our fishermen in the Palk Bay and to find a lasting solution that restores and safeguards the traditional fishing rights of Indian fishermen in their traditional fishing waters.

I also seek early sanction of the 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 which I had requested as part of the Memorandum presented to you on 3.6.2014.

The release of the 54 fishermen and 34 fishing boats from Tamil Nadu currently in Sri Lankan custody must be accorded the highest priority. It is time that the issue is taken up not only through the normal diplomatic channels but at an appropriately high political level and the release of the fishermen and the boats secured without further delay.

May I request an urgent response in the matter?"

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