

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 11.12.2016 of **Thiru O. Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"I write to bring to your kind attention an incident of an unprovoked attack on Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu while fishing in their traditional waters of Palk Bay. Two mechanised fishing boats bearing registration numbers IND/TN/08/MM/125 and IND/TN/06/MM/542 with eight fishermen on board set out for fishing from Jegathapattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District on 10.12.2016. While fishing in their traditional waters, these fishermen came under attack of the Sri Lankan Navy at about 2.30 pm on the same day. It is reported that the Sri Lankan Navy personnel boarded the fishing boats and brutally attacked the poor fishermen. The frightened fishermen, terrorized by the unprovoked and brutal attack of the Sri Lankan Navy, returned to shore immediately. On their return, they were treated at a local Hospital at Manamelkudi, Pudukottai.

In spite of the several steps taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu under the leadership of our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma to find a permanent pragmatic solution to this sensitive livelihood issue, the situation at sea remains precarious because of the belligerent actions of the Sri Lankan Navy. The Sri Lankan Navy continues to unleash its reign of terror on our fishermen in the Palk Bay, where these fishermen have earned their meagre livelihood from time immemorial. The inhuman and barbaric acts of the Sri Lankan Navy continue unabated in spite of several rounds of talks and meetings between Government of Sri Lanka and the Government of India wherein it was assured that force would not be used against bonafide Indian fishermen.

Our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had repeatedly pointed out that the retrieval of Katchatheevu Island and the abrogation of the 1974 agreement alone can restore the traditional fishing grounds of the Palk Bay to the Tamil Nadu fishermen. The stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu is that the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka cannot be treated as settled by the Government of India. The ceding of Katchatheevu has been challenged on valid and legal grounds by our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in the Supreme Court of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu has subsequently impleaded itself in the case.

I also wish to bring to your kind attention that as on date there are 15 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu languishing in Sri Lankan custody, including 11 fishermen who were apprehended on 19.11.2016. I request you to direct urgent diplomatic level intervention by the Government of India to enable the early release of the fishermen in Sri Lankan custody.

Further, the unrelenting Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the boats of our fishermen is causing great frustration amongst the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. Without the basic means of earning their livelihood, 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 107 boats which continue to suffer great damage.

I request you to intervene personally in this sensitive livelihood issue of our fishermen and use diplomatic channels to curb the violent actions of the Sri Lankan Navy on innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu. It is very important that the Government of India acts decisively to ensure that our fishermen can pursue their livelihood with freedom and peace of mind in their traditional waters of Palk Bay. I also request the Government of India to secure the release of 15 fishermen and 107 fishing boats without any delay."

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