

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. letter dated 12.2.2016 of **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"It is unfortunate that the apprehension and arrest of our Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy while pursuing their traditional avocation of fishing, continues unabated. I write to bring to your notice that two mechanized fishing boats with 12 fishermen onboard, who went for fishing on 10.2.2016, from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 11.2.2016, and taken to Thalaimannar, Sri Lanka.

My Government stays committed to ensuring and upholding the traditional rights of fishermen from Tamil Nadu to fish in their traditional fishing waters of Palk Bay. The repeated attempts by the Sri Lankan Navy to prevent the exercise of their traditional rights by our fishermen by continuing apprehensions, arrests and assaults cannot be allowed to continue further and needs to be halted through concerted efforts by the Government of India.

I have also repeatedly pointed out that the Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the apprehended boats and fishing gear even after releasing the fishermen has severely impaired the means of livelihood of several fishermen families causing great frustration and despondency amongst the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu. The prolonged detention, long periods of disuse and the monsoon would have severely damaged these boats. I request that the boats and fishing gear, which are the only means of livelihood of our fishermen, are restored and refurbished by the Government of India at the earliest.

You are well aware that the position of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) itself is a matter which is sub judice in the Supreme Court of India as I have challenged the constitutional validity of the Indo- Sri Lankan agreements of 1974 and 1976 in my personal capacity, and subsequently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has also impleaded itself in this case.

A prestigious scheme of providing subsidy up to Rs.30 lakhs for procuring new Deep Sea Fishing Boats, aimed at equipping

our fishermen to expand their deep sea fishing capabilities for the first time in the country, launched by my Government, is under progress. I have also sought assistance to the extent of Rs.1520 crores as a comprehensive financial package with a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging, from the Government of India for deep sea fishing and infrastructure. I reiterate my request for early sanction of the Government of Tamil Nadu's proposal.

There is an urgent and imperative need to proactively initiate an appropriate set of actions that will bring about a permanent solution to the fishermen issue that plagues the livelihoods of thousands of Tamil Nadu fishermen. Meanwhile, I urge your personal intervention in this matter and request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities so as to secure the immediate release of 27 fishermen and 71 fishing boats including the 12 fishermen and their two fishing boats apprehended on 11.2.2016.

May I request you to take immediate action in this regard?"

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