

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 14.2.2014 addressed by Selvi J Jayalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Dr. Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:

"I am constrained to bring to your notice yet another incident in which 29 of our fishermen were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 13.2.2014. The Sri Lankan Navy is now acting with greater impunity and effectively thwarting Indian fishermen coming from the Coastal Districts of Tamil Nadu from peacefully pursuing their livelihood in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay. Every fishing voyage of our fishermen is now laden with danger and the anxiety of possible attack, harassment, apprehension and custodial detention by the Sri Lankan authorities. It is extremely disheartening that hostile actions have been intensified by the Sri Lankan Navy after the recent fishermen level talks hosted in Chennai, which represented a positive step forward to resolve the livelihood issues through mutual agreement, between the fishermen of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka with the support of their Governments.

In this current episode, 7 mechanised fishing boats belonging to Ramanathapuram and Pudukkottai Districts, bearing Registration No. IND-TN-10-MM-33, IND-TN-10-MM-836, IND-TN-10-MM-841, IND-TN-11-MM-83, IND-TN-11-MM-46, IND-TN-08-MM-323 and IND-TN-08-MM-349, with 29 fishermen who ventured for fishing from Rameswaram, Mandapam (North) and Jagathapattinam fishing bases have been apprehended in the Palk Bay on 13.2.2014 and it is reported that they have been remanded to the Jaffna prison up to 24.2.2014 by the District and Magistrate's court, Kayts, Jaffna.

I have clearly indicated in my previous letters that the normal life and the right to livelihood of our fishermen of the 5 Coastal Districts of Tamil Nadu, viz. Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam have been left to the mercy of the marauding Sri Lankan Navy primarily due to the ill-advised 1974 and 1976 Agreements of the Government of India. These agreements have not only snatched away the livelihood of our fishermen but also the sovereign territory of India - Katchatheevu. The Government of India is yet again treating the livelihood issue of lakhs of fishermen of Tamil Nadu with inexplicable insensitivity. Strong diplomatic action is not being taken by the Government of India to curb such repeated instances of attack, apprehension and unlawful detention of our fishermen.

May I once again exhort you to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan Government and arrange for the immediate release of all the 121 fishermen of Tamil Nadu apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy, who are now in Sri Lankan custody, including the 29 fishermen apprehended on 13.2.2014 and their 26 fishing boats? I once again urge you to intervene personally and ensure that the matter is taken up at the highest diplomatic level for the immediate release of the 121 fishermen belonging to Tamil Nadu and their 26 fishing boats.”

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