

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O Letter dated 16.10.2014 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 you to bring to your notice the alarming situation that has been developing over the past few months and is now seriously threatening the livelihood of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu caused by the vindictive and vengeful action of the Sri Lankan Navy. Our 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 such boats along with Indian fishermen were harassed and arrested while pursuing their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay.

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 issue 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 our beloved leader Puratchi Thalavi Amma in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

In my letter dated 8.10.2014, I had requested the release of 24 fishermen from Tamil Nadu apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. They continue to be in Sri Lankan custody. In addition, at present 75 boats belonging to the Tamil Nadu fishermen apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy after May, 2014, continue to languish in Sri Lankan custody. The Sri Lankan side has deliberately and deviously hardened their stance and adopted this harsh approach of not releasing boats.

Fishermen Associations have represented that fishermen families are despondent and in desperate straits due to the non-release of boats for a prolonged period. Their livelihood is severely affected and the ensuing Deepavali festival may be bleak and cheerless for them. They requested me to take up the matter of non-release of boats with the Government of India urgently and seek an early resolution to the issue. Their well-founded apprehension is that with the North East monsoon due to hit the Sri Lankan and Tamil Nadu coast shortly, their impounded boats which have been

precariously berthed in the open, exposed to the elements and with no regular maintenance on the Sri Lankan coast, are likely to suffer irretrievable damage if they are not released at once. Even now, it is reported that disuse and lack of maintenance has led to their deterioration. The high velocity winds expected with the monsoon will damage these precariously anchored boats beyond redemption. I therefore urge you to immediately instruct the concerned Ministry to take up the matter of the safe berthing of these 75 boats pending release with the Sri Lankan authorities.

In parallel, the immediate release of these boats must also be taken up. Being deprived of their boats which are their essential means of earning their livelihood has led to considerable loss of income and reduced many fishermen families to a stage of penury, poverty and to a state of utter despondency. I implore you to kindly intervene in the matter personally and ensure the immediate release of the 75 Indian fishing boats that are still in Sri Lankan custody."

Issued by: Director of Information and Public Relations, Chennai- 9.
Dated : 16.10.2014