

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 18.12.2015 of **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"I write to bring to your notice yet another incident in which 4 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu in one mechanised fishing boat who set out for fishing from Jegathapattinam fishing base in Pudukottai District, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 17.12.2015 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka. It is unfortunate that the Sri Lankan authorities are persisting with their aggressive and offensive approach of apprehending Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu and infringing upon their traditional right to pursue their peaceful livelihood of fishing in the Palk Bay. With the latest apprehension, 41 fishermen and 56 boats are currently in Sri Lankan custody over the past several weeks.

You are aware that the IMBL itself is a matter sub judice in the Supreme Court of India wherein the Indo-Sri Lankan agreements of 1974 and 1976 which ceded the islet of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka have been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by me in my personal capacity in which the Government of Tamil Nadu has impleaded itself subsequently.

As a permanent remedial measure to reduce the fishing pressure in the Palk Bay and also to expand deep sea fishing capabilities to tap the untapped deep sea fishery resources, my Government pioneered a scheme with an outlay of Rs.51.3 crores for providing 50% subsidy assistance upto a maximum of Rs.30 lakhs to our fishermen for procuring new Tuna longliner cum Gill netter. The comprehensive Special Package for deep sea fishing and infrastructure at a cost of Rs.1520 crores and the recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging, which I had requested as part of the Memoranda presented to you on 3.6.2014 and 7.8.2015 are still awaiting the approval of the Government of India.

The continued incarceration of our fishermen and impounding of their boats in Sri Lanka just as the festive season is beginning is causing great frustration and despondency amongst the fisherfolk of Tamil Nadu. Hence I urge you again to urgently take up this issue with the Sri Lankan authorities at the appropriate level and ensure the immediate release of the fishermen, their boats and fishing gear.

The Government of India should act decisively in the light of the sensitive nature of this issue and initiate a calibrated set of actions to end the sufferings of our fishermen. I urge your personal intervention in this matter and request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter strongly with the Sri Lankan authorities and secure the immediate release of 41 fishermen and 56 fishing boats including the 4 fishermen and their fishing boat apprehended on 17.12.2015. I also request you to expedite the return of four Indian fishermen and their motorised craft which was stranded on the Sri Lankan shores on 8.11.2015 due to mechanical failure.”

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