

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. letter dated 19.1.2016 of **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"I write again to bring to your notice two more incidents of apprehension of 6 Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy on 17.1.2016 and 19.1.2016. These incidents are a rude shock, coming as they do, when Tamil Nadu is eagerly awaiting the home coming of the 104 fishermen whose release has been announced after several months of incarceration in Sri Lankan Jails.

In the latest incident, 3 fishermen in a mechanised fishing boat from Tamil Nadu had set out for fishing from Kottaipattinam fishing base in Pudukottai District, and were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the late hours of 17.1.2016 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka. 3 other fishermen in a motorized country craft from Tamil Nadu, who had set out for fishing on 17.1.2016 from Sethubavachatram fishing base in Thanjavur District, have been apprehended on 19.1.2016.

The right to fish in the traditional waters of Palk Bay which has been historically enjoyed by our fishermen in Tamil Nadu is now being continuously denied by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is my Government's stand that the Government of India should not treat the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements have been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by me in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008. The Government of Tamil Nadu has also been subsequently impleaded in these cases.

While we are happy to learn of the release of the 104 fishermen, it must not be forgotten that 66 fishing boats and gear, which are the basic requirement for fishermen to earn their livelihood, have not been released yet. These boats and gear continue to suffer damage and deterioration due to long periods of disuse and exposure to the elements particularly due to the heavy North East Monsoon this year. I request that these boats and gear, the only means of livelihood of the fishermen, are restored and returned to our fishermen in a refurbished condition by the Government of India at the earliest.

My Government has encouraged deep sea fishing so as to ensure better livelihood opportunities to the fishermen by providing subsidy assistance for purchasing deep sea tuna long liners. There is an urgent need for sanction of the comprehensive special package of deep sea fishing and infrastructure at a cost of Rs.1520 crores with a 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.

I request you to immediately direct the concerned officials in the Ministry of External Affairs to take expeditious action through diplomatic channels to secure the release of the 6 fishermen along with 68 fishing boats."