

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O Letter dated 20.11.2015 addressed by Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India:

"You would recall that I have written to you on several occasions bringing to your notice the repeated instances of abduction and apprehension of innocent fishermen belonging to the coastal Districts of Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy while pursuing their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters of the Palk Bay. It is unfortunate that, in yet another incident, 14 fishermen with their 3 mechanised fishing boats who set out for fishing from the Rameswaram and Mandapam fishing bases in Ramanathapuram District, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the late hours of 18.11.2015, and they have been taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka. I am also informed that on 8.11.2015, 4 fishermen in a motorised country boat who had drifted and got stranded on the Sri Lankan shores due to engine failure are yet to be sent back to India.

I am also constrained to point out that already, 47 fishing boats along with fishing gear which are essential for fishermen to earn their livelihood, are still in the custody of Sri Lankan authorities and have not yet been released. The impounded boats that are perilously berthed, face the imminent threat of irreparable damage due to long periods of disuse and the onset of the monsoon. It will condemn the boats and equipment to ruin and the poor fishermen who are currently suffering a temporary loss of livelihood, would be subjected to a huge permanent loss.

My Government firmly believes that the unconstitutional Indo-Sri Lankan Agreements of 1974 and 1976 and the unilateral ceding of the Katchatheevu islet is the root cause of the problem. The historic rights of the fishermen from Tamil Nadu to their peaceful avocation of fishing in the traditional waters of the Palk Bay are being consistently infringed upon by the Sri Lankan Navy and our fishermen are put to untold hardship.

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.

This livelihood issue of thousands of our fisherfolk needs your personal intervention. The Government of India should not allow this issue to fester further. I request you to take immediate action through diplomatic channels to secure the release of the 14 Indian fishermen and 50 fishing boats from Sri Lankan custody as well as the early return of the 4 fishermen who had drifted to the Sri Lankan shores due to engine failure on 8.11.2015.

I kindly request your immediate intervention in the matter."
