

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 20.12.2014 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:

"You would recall that I had written to you on 16.12.2014, indicating that, in view of the approaching Christmas festival, in a spirit of accommodation and magnanimity and as a humanitarian gesture, the Government of Tamil Nadu is prepared to release the 30 Sri Lankan fishermen and their 19 boats currently in custody in Tamil Nadu on 22.12.2014, after completion of formalities, so that they can return home and celebrate Christmas with their families. I had also requested you to ensure that the Government of Sri Lanka also releases the 66 Tamil Nadu fishermen and their 81 boats which are in the custody of Sri Lanka at the same time so that they can also return home in time for Christmas.

We understand from a letter dated 19.12.2014 received from the Ministry of External Affairs that although the offer of the Government of Tamil Nadu was conveyed to the Government of Sri Lanka, the Government of Sri Lanka is agreeable only to release 66 Indian fishermen but not the boats. As you would recall, my respected Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma has consistently taken up the issue of the release of the fishing boats which have been detained since June, 2014, leading to their deterioration in the South-West and North-East monsoon periods. Hence it is disappointing to learn that the Sri Lankan Government is unwilling to release the boats of the Tamil Nadu fishermen. It only confirms what my respected Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had always maintained, that the Government of Sri Lanka is pursuing a sinister strategy of depriving fishermen families in Tamil Nadu of their source of livelihood. I urge you to immediately take up once again the issue of release of the fishing boats of our fishermen.

However, given the approaching Christmas festival, in a spirit of generosity and magnanimity, the Government of Tamil Nadu will go ahead with the release of all the 30 fishermen from Sri Lanka on 22.12.2014. We expect that the Government of India will ensure that the 66 fishermen from Tamil Nadu in Sri Lankan custody will also return home well in time for Christmas."

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