

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 20.12.2016 of **Thiru O. Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India :-

"I am constrained to bring to your notice yet another incident of apprehension of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that 7 fishermen in two mechanised fishing boats who set sail from Kottaipattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 20.12.2016. The boats and fishermen have been reportedly taken to Karainagar in Sri Lanka and remanded to custody.

It is unfortunate that the apprehension of fishermen of Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy, while pursuing their traditional avocation of fishing, continues unabated despite Indo-Sri Lankan fishermen level talks and Inter-Ministerial talks being held from time to time.

The right to life and livelihood of the fishermen of the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu, who carry on fishing in the traditional waters of the Palk Bay is being continuously infringed upon by the Sri Lankan Navy's recurrent actions of apprehension, attack and harassment of innocent fishermen. It is the consistent stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu that a permanent solution to this vexatious problem faced by our fishermen will be possible only by restoring India's sovereignty over Katchatheevu thereby securing their right to fish in their traditional waters. The position of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) itself is a matter which is sub-judice in the Supreme Court of India.

A firm, clear and unambiguous message should be sent out by the Government of India to the Sri Lankan side to ensure that this trend needs to be reversed and that the Government of India is firmly committed to protect the livelihood of the poor and innocent fishermen from Tamil Nadu engaged in fishing in their traditional waters of the Palk Bay.

There are now 109 boats including the two boats apprehended today that are yet to be released by the Sri Lankan side. The Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the boats of our fishermen is causing great frustration amongst the fishermen of Tamil Nadu. Without their livelihood base, these fishermen are in a state of despondency.

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I urge your personal intervention in this matter and request you to kindly direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter with the Sri-Lankan authorities so as to secure the immediate release of the 22 fishermen and 109 boats, including the fishermen and boats apprehended today (20.12.2016)."

Issued by: Director, Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9.
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