

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 21.6.2015 addressed by Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:-

"This is to bring to your notice one more unfortunate incident in which 17 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu, along with their 2 fishing boats, have been apprehended and detained by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that two Mechanized Fishing Boats set sail on 19.6.2015, from the Nagapattinam fishing base in Nagapattinam District with 17 fishermen on board, and while they were fishing in their traditional fishing waters, they were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the late hours of 20th June, 2015. The boats and the fishermen have been taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

The recurring instances of apprehension of our fishermen while they are engaged in their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters in the high seas in the Palk Bay, by the Sri Lankan Navy and their prolonged detention is causing great unrest amongst the fishermen community across the State. Further, the Sri Lankan strategy of not releasing the boats of the fishermen is causing great long term economic loss to the poor fishermen whose only means of livelihood is being snatched away. 18 fishing boats of Tamil Nadu fishermen continue to be in Sri Lankan custody for more than 3 months and in addition, 14 fishermen along with their 3 boats apprehended on June 1st, 2015, are yet to be released.

These arrests vitiate the congenial atmosphere in which the Government of Tamil Nadu facilitated three rounds of bilateral fishermen level talks in Chennai on January 27th, 2014, in Colombo on May 12th, 2014, and again in Chennai on March 24th, 2015.

The unconstitutional agreements of 1974 and 1976 of the Union Government, which unilaterally ceded the islet of Katchatheevu, is depriving our fishermen of their traditional and historic right of fishing in their traditional waters. I have challenged the ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka in my personal capacity, in the Supreme

Court, on extremely valid and legal grounds, and the Government of Tamil Nadu has also subsequently impleaded itself in the Petition.

In the Memorandum I had presented to you on 3.6.2014, I had outlined some of the measures for a permanent solution to this vexatious problem, including the retrieval of the Islet of Katchatheevu, and measures to diversify fishing activity from the shallow Palk Bay and near shore waters to the under-exploited oceanic waters, by sanctioning a financial package of Rs.1520 crores and a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging. We are yet to receive a favourable response to these issues.

In the meantime, I urge your personal intervention in the matter and request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities at the highest level to secure the immediate release of 31 apprehended fishermen and their 23 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody including the 17 fishermen and 2 fishing boats apprehended on 20th June, 2015. "

Issued by: Director of Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9
Dated: 21.6.2015