

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. letter dated 20.12.2015 of **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.

"I write to bring to your notice that close on the heels of the incident of apprehension of fishermen from Tamil Nadu on 17.12.2015, there has been yet another incident on 19.12.2015, in which the Sri Lankan Navy apprehended one Mechanized Fishing Boat with 6 fishermen on board, who went for fishing from Jegathapattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District. The boat and the fishermen have been taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

The frequency of apprehensions and abductions of our fishermen is on the increase. These recurrent instances of attacks upon, and abductions of, our fishermen on the high seas in the Palk Bay should be stopped immediately and our fishermen should be allowed to pursue their peaceful avocation of fishing in their traditional fishing waters of Palk Bay.

It is the consistent stand of the Government of Tamil Nadu that the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka cannot be treated as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements ceding Katchatheevu islet have been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by me, in my personal capacity, in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008 and subsequently, the Government of Tamil Nadu has also impleaded itself in this case.

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.

As on date, 56 fishing boats with their fishing gear are still languishing in Sri Lankan custody for several months. Long period of disuse and the exposure to the onslaught of an exceptionally strong North East monsoon this year would have inflicted severe damages to the boats and equipment. The poor fishermen who are currently suffering a temporary loss of livelihood, would now be subjected to a huge permanent livelihood loss due to the damage to the fishing boats. I request that the Government of India take necessary action to restore in a refurbished condition the boats and fishing gear of these poor fishermen.

I urge your personal intervention in this matter and request you to direct the Ministry of External Affairs to strongly take up the matter with the Sri Lankan authorities to secure the immediate release of 47 fishermen and 57 fishing boats including the 6 fishermen and their fishing boat apprehended on 19.12.2015. I also request you to expedite the return of four Indian fishermen and their motorised craft that was stranded on Sri Lankan shores on 8.11.2015 due to mechanical failure.

May I request you to take immediate action in this regard?"

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