

**Press Release No. 432**

**Date:23.07.2012**

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. letter dated 23.7.2012 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Dr. Manmohan Singh**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:-

"I wish to bring to your kind notice yet another incident of apprehension of Rameswaram fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy on 22.7.2012 which has occurred for the second time, within a period of 15 days, in the month of July. Five Mechanized fishing boats bearing Registration Nos: TN/10/MFB/228, TN/10/MFB/400, TN/10/MFB/279, TN/10/MFB/863 and TN/10/MFB/273, which went for fishing on 21.7.2012 from Rameswaram base, with 23 fishermen onboard, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and are at present under custody at Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka, having been remanded for two weeks.

The above fishermen were fishing in the sea off Katchatheevu, in their traditional fishing waters, when they were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy. As I had already informed you, in my previous letters, the incidents of apprehension and harassment by the Sri Lankan Navy have become a regular occurrence in the past two months, especially after the end of the fishing ban period. The intention of the Sri Lankan Navy to instill fear in the minds of the fishermen and prevent them from conducting fishing in their traditional waters is very obvious from the above incident of apprehension. The above actions of the Sri Lankan Navy have created a feeling of insecurity in the minds of the fishermen, who feel that there is no guarantee for their life and property in the sea, in the prevailing situation.

It would not be out of context to mention that the Sri Lankan Navy temporarily suspends apprehension and harassment activities only at times when diplomatic level meetings are convened between India and Sri Lanka on the fishing issue and resumes such activities immediately thereafter, much to the woe of our fishermen. The fishermen of the districts adjoining Palk Bay, especially from the Rameswaram area, are targeted by the Sri Lankan Navy, making it impossible for the fishermen to conduct fishing which is the only occupation they know for the sustenance of their families.

I, therefore, request you to kindly arrange for the immediate release of the 23 Rameswaram fishermen with their five boats to Tamil Nadu urgently. Kindly take up this issue with the Sri Lankan Government and request it to instruct its Navy to refrain from arresting fishermen who conduct fishing in their traditional waters only for eking out their livelihood. I also wish to point out that unless the Government of India intervenes in this issue there is every possibility of recurrence of such incidents in the coming months.

I solicit your urgent action in this regard.”

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