

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 22.9.2015 addressed by  
**Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to  
**Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India:

This is to bring to your notice yet another incident in which 15 fishermen in two fishing boats who set sail for fishing from Nagapattinam fishing base were apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 21.9.2015 and taken to Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

This latest apprehension of innocent and unarmed Tamil Nadu fishermen with a motive to intimidate and prevent them from venturing into their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay and in the vicinity of Katchatheevu, which has always been a part of the traditional fishing area of our fishermen, adds to the immense frustration that has built up among the fishermen community of Tamil Nadu.

Further, as you are aware, as on date, 26 fishing boats belonging to our fishermen still continue to be in Sri Lankan custody. Boats and fishing gear which are essential for the poor fishermen to earn their livelihood are deliberately not released by the Sri Lankan authorities while releasing fishermen. Long periods of disuse condemns the boats and equipment to ruin and the poor fishermen are subjected to a huge permanent loss.

As I have reiterated on several occasions my Government strongly believes that the unconstitutional Indo-Sri Lankan Agreements of 1974 and 1976 should be nullified and the traditional rights of our fishermen restored at the earliest. I would like to once again point out that the Government of India should not treat the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) with Sri Lanka as a settled question as the constitutionality of the 1974 and 1976 agreements has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. I had personally filed W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008, in which the Government of Tamil Nadu had also subsequently impleaded itself. The main prayer before the Supreme Court is to declare the 1974 and 1976 agreements along with the Executive Order of 1976 as null and void in the absence of the required mandatory Constitutional amendment, and to retrieve Katchatheevu for India. Our stand is that Katchatheevu has always been a part of India, geographically, culturally and historically and

needs to be retrieved, keeping in view the livelihood interests and security of lakhs of Indian fishermen.

My Government is implementing various innovative schemes to build up the capacity of our fishermen to venture into deep sea fishing in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). I have also sought for assistance of Rs.1520 crores from the Government of India to enable diversification of fishing operations by the fishermen community.

The unjustified denial of the right of our fishermen to eke out their humble livelihood in their traditional waters of the Palk Bay should not be allowed to fester further. I am confident that your Government will find suitable mechanisms to resolve this long pending fishing dispute between India and Sri Lanka by retrieving Katchatheevu and restoring the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen. In the meantime, the immediate issue of the arrest of the fishermen needs to be addressed. I once again call upon the Government of India to take positive and concrete steps to secure the immediate release of the 15 fishermen and the 28 boats in Sri Lankan custody.

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