

P.R. No. 095

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PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 27.2.2015 addressed by Thiru O. Panneerselvam, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below

I write to bring to your notice, an incident of apprehension of fishermen from Tamil Nadu, in which 29 fishermen and three fishing boats bearing registration Nos. IND-TN-06-MM-44, IND-TN-06-MM-743 and IND-TN-08-MM-1306 who set sail -on 24.2.2015, have been apprehended on 26.2.2015 by the Sri Lankan Navy and are under detention.

It is unfortunate that this incident has taken place even after the change in regime in Sri Lanka. In a situation where the untiring efforts towards the welfare and safety of Tamil Nadu fishermen relentlessly pursued by my revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma were bearing fruit, it is unfortunate that the festive mood on the eve of St. Antony's Festival in Katchatheevu, has been completely vitiated by the actions of the Sri Lankan Navy which has apprehended 29 fishermen and their three fishing boats.

The fishermen in Tamil Nadu are also eagerly awaiting the return of the 81 fishing boats which were in Sri Lankan custody for a long time and have been recently released due to the concerted efforts of my revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Nearly 10 lakh fisherfolk in Tamil Nadu depend on marine fishing as their only source of livelihood. As our revered Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had indicated earlier, the Government of Tamil Nadu under her leadership had taken a number of steps towards diversification of their avocation to minimize the pressure on the marine ecosystem. A two pronged approach is necessary at this juncture to solve this chronic problem. One is sanction of the

financial package of Rs.1520 crores and a recurring grant of Rs.10 crores per annum for maintenance dredging, that our Leader had requested from the Central Government, which would go a long way in improving the socio economic status of the fishermen. The second is the abrogation of the 1974 and 1976 agreements and retrieval of Katchatheevu as well as restoration of the traditional and historical fishing grounds of the Palk Bay to the Tamil Nadu fishermen. The ceding of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds by our Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her personal capacity and also by the Government of Tamil Nadu in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

May I request you to instruct the Ministry of External Affairs to take up the matter immediately and ensure the prompt release of the 29 fishermen from Tamil Nadu and their 3 boats from Sri Lankan custody?

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