

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O. Letter dated 27.10.2015 addressed by Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India:-

"I write to bring to your notice that even before the 86 fishermen currently in Sri Lankan custody could actually be released as informed on 24.10.2015 by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, it is shocking to learn that 34 fishermen from Tamil Nadu along with their 7 boats have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in two separate incidents that occurred on 26.10.2015 and 27.10.2015.

As you are aware, in response to my relentless efforts, the Government of India intervened with the Sri Lankan authorities to secure the release of 86 Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu who had been arrested over the past two months while peacefully pursuing their livelihood activities in their traditional fishing waters in the Palk Bay. Even before these fishermen could return home, 10 fishermen in 2 boats who set sail from the Rameswaram fishing base on 26.10.2015 have been taken into custody and detained in Talaimannar in Sri Lanka. In yet another incident, 24 fishermen in 5 boats from Pudukkottai District have been arrested and detained at Kankesanthurai in the early hours of 27.10.2015. The arrest and detention of these fishermen who were peacefully engaged in fishing activities in their traditional fishing waters is unjustified.

I have already pointed out on a number of occasions that the Sri Lankan authorities apart from apprehending and detaining the poor fishermen from Tamil Nadu, keep the fishing boats in custody which causes huge loss both in terms of deterioration of the vessels and the fishing equipment and also loss of livelihood opportunities. This is not only inhuman but also aimed at destroying the livelihood base of the poor marine fishermen in Tamil Nadu.

I have repeatedly urged that a permanent solution to this vexatious issue must be found without further delay. I have also outlined the contours of such a solution in the Memorandum that I have presented to you on 3.6.2014, and emphasized the same in my letters addressed to you on this issue and the Memorandum presented to you on 7.8.2015. I have repeatedly and emphatically pointed out that the unconstitutionality of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreements of 1974 and 1976 and the ceding of the Katchatheevu islet, is the root cause of the problem. I had also sought the early sanction of the Comprehensive Special Package for deep sea fishing

and infrastructure at a cost of Rs.1520 crores. As you are aware, the Members of Parliament from Tamil Nadu also met the Union Minister for External Affairs on 26.10.2015 and presented the letters written by me conveying the concerns of my Government on this issue and urged the Government of India to take immediate action as requested in the letters. I request you to immediately act on our long pending demands for a sustainable solution to this vexatious issue.

I request you to immediately direct the concerned officials in the Ministry of External Affairs to contact their counterparts on the Sri Lankan side and ensure that the 34 fishermen arrested on 26.10.2015, are released forthwith along with the 86 fishermen who are due to be released on 28.10.2015. Further, I request you to immediately take up the issue of release of the 46 boats in Sri Lankan custody including the 7 boats which were apprehended on 26.10.2015 and 27.10.2015.

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

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