

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O. letter dated 27.10.2017 of **Thiru Edappadi K. Palaniswami**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi.

"At the outset, I thank you for the Government of India's concerted efforts in the release of 36 fishing boats belonging to fishermen of Tamil Nadu apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy. Out of the 36 fishing boats released, 26 fishing boats were salvaged by our fishermen and 10 fishing boats could not be retrieved as they were severely damaged. In the recent past, there were incidents, in which, a total of 46 fishermen in nine mechanised fishing boats who set sail for fishing from Ramanathapuram and Pudukottai Districts of Tamil Nadu have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 11.9.2017, 19.9.2017, 5.10.2017, 11.10.2017, 16.10.2017, 20.10.2017 and on 26.10.2017.

The Sri Lankan Navy continues to harass our fishermen who pursue their humble livelihood of fishing in their traditional waters of Palk Bay. In the latest incident, 5 fishermen in one mechanised fishing boat set sail from Kottaipattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District of Tamil Nadu on 26.10.2017, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and were reportedly taken to Sri Lanka.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is extremely concerned about the continuing instances of apprehension and detention of our fishermen. So far, in 2017, 317 Tamil Nadu fishermen and 62 fishing boats have been apprehended in 59 incidents and 263 of these fishermen have been released after considerable persuasion by the Governments of India and Tamil Nadu.

Even though the fishermen have been released from time to time, their boats and fishing gear, the only means of livelihood of these poor fishermen families are still impounded in Sri Lanka. These fishing boats are deteriorating due to prolonged exposure to the inclement weather and lack of maintenance. In spite of the commitment to release all these fishing boats, the Government of Sri Lanka released only 36 fishing boats out of 61 fishing boats apprehended in 2015. There are 140 fishing boats including the nine fishing boats apprehended in the recent incidents which are yet to be released. This is fueling unrest among the fisherfolk.

The Government of Tamil Nadu strongly reiterates the need for Government of India to register its strong disapproval against the Sri Lankan Navy's belligerent actions. The constitutional validity of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1974 has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in W.P. (Civil) No.561/2008 by our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her personal capacity. The Government of Tamil Nadu subsequently impleaded itself in this case. Hence in our view the IMBL is not a settled issue. I reassure you that the Government of Tamil Nadu is taking all possible earnest steps with the support of Government of India to diversify away from trawler fishing in the Palk Bay to deep sea fishing as a way forward to put an end to the sufferings of our fishermen in the Palk Bay.

I strongly urge you to personally intervene and take up the issue of the alarming and frequent abduction of our fishermen in their traditional waters with the highest authorities in the Sri Lankan Government so as to ensure the safety and security of Indian fishermen in the Palk Bay from Tamil Nadu. The Government of India is also requested to secure the immediate release of 54 fishermen and 140 fishing boats including the 46 fishermen and their 9 mechanized fishing boats apprehended recently without any delay."

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