

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 2.3.2017 of Thiru Edapaddi K.Palaniswami, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India :-

"This is to bring to your notice, yet another incident of apprehension of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy. It is reported that 9 fishermen in a mechanised fishing boat who set sail from Nagapattinam fishing base of Nagapattinam District and 4 fishermen in a mechanised fishing boat who set sail from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu, have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy on 2.3.2017. The boats and fishermen have been reportedly taken to Kankesanthurai in Sri Lanka.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is extremely concerned about the continuing apprehension and detention of our fishermen and their boats. The International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) is itself a matter that is subjudice in the Supreme Court of India. The constitutional validity of the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement of 1974 ceding away Katchatheevu has been challenged on extremely valid and legal grounds in the 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.

An early sanction of Rs.1650 crore for the Comprehensive Package for Deep sea Fishing and Infrastructure that was requested in earlier Memoranda and reiterated in the Memorandum that I had submitted to you on 27th February, 2017 would go a long way in the efforts of promoting deep sea fishing and to improve the socio-economic status of our fishermen in the Palk Bay.

There are presently 48 fishermen and 122 fishing boats in Sri Lankan custody. Further, boats and fishing gear of these fishermen which are the only means of livelihood of the poor fishermen are still impounded in Sri Lanka. Our beloved leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma in her earlier letters has repeatedly pointed out that the Sri Lankan side is following a deliberate strategy of keeping the apprehended fishing boats of our fishermen in custody and thereby completely impairing the only source of livelihood of poor fishermen. Without their livelihood base, these fishermen are in a state of despondency. Though the Government of Sri Lanka committed to consider the release of these boats, no decision has been taken in this regard. I request the Government of India to take up this serious issue with the highest authorities of the Sri Lankan Government and ensure the immediate release of the precariously berthed boats which continue to suffer great damage with every passing day.

The Government of Tamil Nadu strongly urges that such incidents of apprehension of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy be taken up strongly at the highest diplomatic level to ensure the safety and security of our fishermen in the Palk Bay. The Government of India is requested to secure the immediate release of 48 fishermen and 122 fishing boats including the 13 fishermen and their two mechanized fishing boats apprehended on 2.3.2017 without any delay."

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