

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 2.9.2014 addressed by **Selvi J Jayalalithaa**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India is reproduced below:-

"This is to bring to your notice two more incidents of apprehension of Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu by the Sri Lankan Navy while fishing in their traditional waters in the Palk Bay. In the first incident, 9 fishermen set sail in 2 fishing boats from Ramanathapuram District on 1.9.2014 for fishing and one mechanized fishing boat sank in the sea. The fishermen on board the boat that sank were rescued by the fishermen in the other boat. This boat which had rescued the fishermen who were in distress was apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy along with all 9 fishermen and taken to Kankesanthurai and they have been remanded up to 16.9.2014.

In another incident which took place on 2.9.2014, a fishing boat from Ramanathapuram District carrying 6 fishermen developed mechanical failure and sank. It is reported that these 6 fishermen have also been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy and taken to Karainagar Naval base, Sri Lanka.

In the last two months, there have been 15 incidents of apprehensions wherein 319 fishermen from Tamil Nadu have been apprehended along with their 62 fishing boats. Due to the efforts of your Government all the 319 fishermen have been released. Unfortunately the 62 fishing boats continue to be in Sri Lankan custody.

The Sri Lankan Government's inhumane and cruel strategy of not releasing the boats of our fishermen is causing great loss of livelihood to the fishermen and their families. **It is particularly distressing that a senior member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Dr. Subramanian Swamy has, in a televised media interview on 1.9.2014, stated that it was he who had advised the Sri Lankan Government not to release the boats of the Tamil Nadu fishermen. This statement of Dr. Subramanian Swamy has given rise to resentment and angst not only amongst the fishermen community but also amongst the entire population of Tamil Nadu. I am confident that these are not the official views of your Party or of the Government of India.**

Without their sole means of earning their livelihood, these fishermen are in a despondent state. Denying our fishermen the right to peaceful fishing in their traditional waters of the Palk Bay, to which they have a historical claim, is fuelling a sense of frustration amongst them. The desperate fishermen are resorting to protests and strikes.

This issue of non-release of 62 fishing boats of our fishermen was highlighted by the Secretary, Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, in the recently held meeting of the India-Sri Lanka Joint Committee on Fisheries held on 29.8.2014 at New Delhi.

I am confident that your Government will find suitable mechanisms to resolve this long pending fishing dispute between Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka by retrieving Katchatheevu and restoring the traditional fishing rights of our fishermen in the Palk Bay. The alarmingly increasing frequency of apprehension of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy is a matter of utmost concern for my Government. An immediate intervention at the highest level is sought to resolve this long standing issue.

I urge you to take this up with the highest authorities of the Sri Lankan Government and ensure the immediate release of the 15 fishermen now apprehended and all the 63 boats in their custody.”.

Issued by: Director, Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 9.
Date: 2.9.2014