

**PRESS RELEASE**

Text of the D.O.Letter dated 8.1.2017 of **Thiru O. Panneerselvam**, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu addressed to **Shri Narendra Modi**, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India:-

"At the outset I thank you for responding to the repeated requests made by me on behalf of the Government of Tamil Nadu and ensuring that the Government of India took concerted efforts to secure the release of 51 Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan custody. Unfortunately, even before the sense of relief following the release of the 51 fishermen could fully set in and the released fishermen reached our shores, the Sri Lankan navy has yet again resorted to its harsh and unjust tactic of apprehending Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu while peacefully pursuing their avocation in the traditional fishing waters of the Palk Bay.

It is reported that, in two separate incidents on 8.1.2017, 6 fishermen in one mechanised fishing boat who set sail from Jegathapattinam fishing base of Pudukottai District and 4 fishermen in another mechanised fishing boat who set sail from Rameswaram fishing base of Ramanathapuram District of Tamil Nadu have been apprehended by the Sri Lankan Navy in the early hours of 8.1.2017. The boats and fishermen have been reportedly taken to Kankesanthurai and Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is extremely concerned about the continuing frequent apprehension and detention of our fishermen. As you are aware, in 2016 itself 290 Tamil Nadu fishermen along with their 53 fishing boats were apprehended in 39 incidents. Subsequently all 290 fishermen were released due to the unstinted efforts of our revered leader the late Hon'ble Chief Minister Puratchi Thalaivi Amma.

Even though the fishermen apprehended earlier have been released, their boats and fishing gear, which represent the only means of livelihood of the poor fishermen are still impounded by the Sri Lankan authorities. Our beloved leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had repeatedly pointed out the Sri Lankan strategy of keeping the fishing boats in custody thereby depriving the poor fishermen and their families of their only source of meager livelihood, was part of a sinister strategy to immiserate our fisherman community. This is fuelling despondency and great unrest amongst the fishermen. The 118 boats of Tamil Nadu fishermen in Sri Lankan custody are deteriorating due to lack of maintenance on a daily basis. These boats have remained exposed to the elements over two North East Monsoon seasons and continue to suffer further damage and deterioration. That is why our Revered Leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had repeatedly called upon Government of India to secure the release of the fishing boats and ensure their return to the fishermen in a refurbished condition.

I wish to reiterate that the International Maritime Boundary line between India and Sri Lanka in the Palk Bay itself is a matter that is sub judice. 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.

An early sanction of Rs.1650 crore for the Deep sea fishing and infrastructure package that our revered leader Puratchi Thalaivi Amma had sought and which I had reiterated in my memorandum presented to you on 19.12.2016, would go a long way in the efforts to promote deep sea fishing and to improve the socio economic status of our fishermen in the Palk Bay.

I also request you to kindly direct the Ministry of External Affairs to take expeditious steps to secure the release of 20 fishermen and 118 fishing boats including the 10 fishermen and their two mechanized fishing boats apprehended on 8.1.2017 without any delay."

\*\*\*\*\*

**Issued by: Director, Information and Public Relations, Chennai – 600 009.**  
**Date: 08.1.2017**