

Karunanidhi, Vaiko protest attacks on Indian fishermen

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressing concern over the Sri Lankan navy repeatedly opening fire on Indian fishermen in the waters between the two countries.

A copy of his letter was given to the media here by the chief minister's office.

In his letter, Karunanidhi urged the union government to ensure that the 'rights and privileges of the Indian fishermen to carry on their normal occupation of fishing in the waters of Katchatheevu (an island in Palk Strait)) must be recognised and restored'.

Reminding the government of the 1974 and 1976 agreements between India and Sri Lanka, Karunanidhi said, 'Fishermen were allowed to dry their nets in Katchatheevu but were prohibited from fishing in Sri Lankan territorial waters around Katchatheevu following executive instructions', which, he pointed out 'did not flow from the two agreements'.

'...they were executive instructions and cannot supersede the provisions of the legally valid agreement entered into by the two countries', Karunanidhi said.

The executive orders have caused a great deal of hardship to Indian fishermen over the years as their 'traditional rights' in Katchatheevu have been denied them.

'Time and again our fishermen have been arrested, attacked and shot dead in these waters. Each one of these incidents has shocked the people of the state and rocked the legislative assembly,' the note said.

'I urge the Government of India to take necessary steps to protect the precious lives of Indian fishermen and also to ensure their livelihood,' Karunanidhi said in his letter.

MDMK general secretary Vaiko too wrote to the prime minister Tuesday, urging him to boycott the forthcoming SAARC meeting in Sri Lanka because of the attacks on ethnic Tamils in the neighbouring country.

(© IANS / India eNews)