

Save fishermen from Lankan navy, Karunanidhi's urges PM

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi Sunday expressed anguish over the alleged killings of Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait by the Sri Lankan Navy and requested the central government to ensure its immediate cessation.

'In spite of assurances given by the government of India, the fishermen of the state feel insecure for fear of attack from Sri Lanka without any warning,' Karunanidhi said in a personal letter addressed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, requesting him to intervene in the matter.

Providing statistics, Karunanidhi said: 'From January 2006 till date, 27 incidents of shooting (in the Palk Strait) have resulted in the killing (and injuries) of eight (locals) and 24 fishermen (respectively). The number of those apprehended during this period is 342.'

Referring to protests by the prime minister during the recently concluded summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held at Colombo, Karunanidhi said 10 fishermen from Nagappattinam were apprehended by Sri Lanka Aug 9 and subsequent strafing Thursday left one fisherman injured.

'The Sri Lankan Navy continues to open fire recklessly resulting in injuries and deaths to Indian fishermen against the international laws of the sea,' Karunanidhi added.

India and Sri Lanka are separated by a narrow expanse of water called the Palk Strait.

The island's navy claims that it opens fire only on those Indian fishermen suspected of smuggling ordnance supplies to the banned Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who have been carrying on a guerrilla war with the government of Sri Lanka to establish a separate Tamil homeland since 1983. The civil war has left over 75,000 people dead.

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