

**A statement issued by Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader and BJP-Shivsena & Allied Parties' candidate from Mumbai North Parliamentary Constituency in a Press Conference held on 8th April, 2009 at Mumbai.**

***Shri Shard Pawar betrays fishermen : Ram Naik.***

**Mumbai, Wednesday:** "Shri Sharad Pawar has betrayed fishermen of the country by withdrawing rebate of excise duty on diesel. Not only Shri Pawar but the UPA will get fitting reply through the ballot boxes in the coastal states", criticized Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader and BJP-Shivsena & Alliance's candidate from North Mumbai parliamentary constituency. "Shri Shard Pawar's decision to give rebate on excise duty of diesel only to fishermen below poverty line is as good as withdrawing the rebate. It is total betrayal. He has rubbed, salt on the wounds of the fishermen who are already facing fishes draught, recession and inflation" said Shri Ram Naik.

Shri Naik has been supporting several demands of fishermen viz. increase in excise duty rebate, loans at low rate of interests etc. with the Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar since 2007. Besides writing several letters Shri Naik along with representatives of fishermen discussed the issues with Shri Pawar on 24th October, 2007. Thereafter he has been pursuing the issue. The last letter was written on 20th February, 2009 by Shri Naik. Recently Shri Sharad Pawar conveyed the decisions of the UPA Government which are totally disappointing. While giving further information Shri Naik said "In 1990 I had raised issues of fishermen during the budget discussion in Lok Sabha. The then Finance Minister Prof. Madhu Dandavate thereafter announced the rebate of 35 paise per liter on excise duty of diesel. Considering escalating prices of oil products in the international market, when I was Petroleum Minister and Shri Rajnath Singh was Agriculture Minister, we took the decision to increase this rebate amount up to Rs.1.50 per liter. However, this rise became insignificant during the UPA regime as it hiked oil prices extraordinarily. To add to the miseries of fishermen, country is also facing draught of fishes. Hence on behalf of fishermen's Unions I had demanded hike in rebate on excise duty of diesel up to Rs.4/-. Shri Pawar has now confirmed that the rebate is increased up to Rs. 3/- . However, this is not good news for fishermen as henceforth not all small fishermen but only those fishermen who are BPL would get the rebate. Shri Sharad Pawar should identify atleast one fisherman who owns a boat and is yet below poverty line", challenged Shri Naik.

Fishing is also considered a farming activity on sea. Therefore fishermen were demanding that like other farmers they too should get loans at the interest rate of 4% from National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC). Though Shri Pawar promised to take a positive decision, he has now advised fishermen to obtain loan from their cooperative societies. He went ahead and said that NCDC provides loan to such cooperative societies at market rate i.e. 12 to 14%.

Presently there is no law to protect fishermen's interest in Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Fishermen were demanding an Act to govern EEZ. The recent terrorists' attacks further vindicated their demand. However Shri Pawar exhibited UPA's insensitivity by saying "Inter-Ministerial consultations on the proposed legislation are yet under process."

On the lines of the other states of the country Maharashtra Government is exploring possibilities of developing eight fishing harbours viz. Mirkarwada (Ratnagiri), Deogad (Anandawadi), Sakhrinate, Harne, Karanja, Jeevana, Arnala and Agardanda since last many years. Fishermen's Unions were requesting Shri Pawar to put pressure on the State Government to accelerate the projects. "However Shri Pawar gave green signal only to Deogad (Anandawadi) and is still awaiting techno-economics feasibility reports for other ports." revealed Shri Naik.

Fishermen in Palghar Tahasil feel that hot water being discharged from newly commissioned Tarapur Atomic Power Project III and IV is endangering fish life at Tarapur. Therefore, they were demanding that fishery experts' study group should examine the sites in presence of the fishermen. Instead Shri Sharad Pawar preferred to trust report of environmentalists that the hot water is within permissible limits. "This shows the method of ignoring fishermen's complaints," said Shri Naik.

"Not only of Maharashtra but the fishermen of the country are agitated because of Shri Pawar's decisions. They will teach a fitting lesson to Shri Sharad Pawar as well as the UPA through ballot boxes", warned Shri Naik at the end.

**(Vinod Shelar)**  
**Media -In-charge**  
**Mobile No. 9867689540**