

PM should rescue fishermen : Ram Naik

Mumbai, Monday : "Diesel rebate to fishermen should be re-instated and they should get loans on the same terms like farmers", was the demand put up to the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh by BJP leaders Shri Ram Naik and M.P. Shri Prakash Javdekar.

While elaborating the issue Shri Naik said,"Considering the increasing prices of diesel fishermen were demanding hike in the rebate since last two years. However since Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar did not resolve the issue we decided to take it up to the Prime Minister."

"On my demand the then Finance Minister Prof. Madhu Dandavate agreed to pay rebate of 35 paise per litre for diesel. Rebate was increased to Rs. 1.50 when I was the Petroleum Minister in the Vajpayee Government. To compensate the corresponding increase in diesel prices the fishermen have been demanding rebate of Rs. 4 /- per litre. By an executive fiat the Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar has increased it to Rs. 3/- but with a condition that the rebate would be available to BPL (Below Poverty Line) fishermen. This amounted to withdrawal of the rebate. Can there be a BPL fisherman who owns a fishing vessel which costs lakhs of rupees? Hence we argued and demanded to delete the provision and to increase the rebate to Rs.4/- per litre", stated Shri Ram Naik.

In the memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister in the last week, Shri Naik and Shri Javdekar also demanded that the loans to fishermen should also be waived and the fishermen should be charged interest at 4 % by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC). Fishing has been treated as farming on sea, it should therefore get all the facilities and concessions which farmers get, argued Shri Naik and Shri Javdekar.

(Office Secretary)