

**Fishermen to launch an agitation if diesel
subsidy is not re-introduced : Ram Naik**

Mumbai, Wednesday: "The fishermen will launch an agitation if diesel subsidy is not re-introduced and other demands do not find their place in the ensuing general budget for 2009-2010," warned Shri Ram Naik, former Petroleum Minister. Shri Ram Naik alongwith Shri Gopal Shetty, President, BJP-Mumbai and MLA and Shri Ramesh Medhekar, Vice-President, BJP-Mumbai submitted demands of fishermen to Shri Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture in New Delhi on Monday. Since Shri Pawar was out of India, the demands were discussed with Shri Tarun Shreedhar, Joint Secretary (Fisheries).

While giving details Shri Ram Naik said,"Fishermen used to get rebate of 35 paise per litre on excise duty of diesel. During the Vajpayee government we increased the rebate upto Rs. 1.50 per litre in view of the increased prices of petroleum products in the international market. As the prices further shot up in the last two years the fishermen had demanded increase of this rebate upto Rs.4/-. In the order dated 19th February 2009 issued by the Ministry of Agriculture the rebate was increased to Rs.3/- per litre but with a rider that it would be available only to BPL (Below Poverty Line) fishermen. The criteria of the BPL in Maharashtra is monthly income of Rs. 362.25 in rural areas and Rs. 665.90 in urban areas. I challenge the Agriculture Minister to show me one BPL fisherman who owns a fishing vessel. The increase has resulted in total withdrawal of the rebate available to the fishermen. We, therefore, demanded increase of rebate upto Rs. 4/- and removal of the BPL tag."

Shri Naik further added,"The delegation also demanded loan available to fishermen from National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) at 4 % per annum on the lines of the loans made available to farmers. It is wel-known that fishing is said to be farming on sea. We, therefore, demanded that loans should be made available at 4%."

"We had earlier suggested that there should be a new act to provide for law and order situation in the sea waters in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The problem has been highlighted because 26/11's terrorists entered Mumbai via sea. Shri Pawar had assured us that a bill is being drafted in consultation with different Ministries. We damanded that the bill must be introduced in the ensuing Parliament session,"added Shri Ram Naik at the end.

(Office Secretary)