

**Agri Minister Shri Sharad Pawar promises fishermen
to help getting loan at 4% interest and also Diesel rebate**

Mumbai, Sunday: "Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar has promised fishermen to facilitate getting loan at 4 percent interest and also development rebate on diesel at Rs.4 per litre. This assurance was given to a Bharatiya Janata Party delegation led by former Petroleum Minister Shri Ram Naik on Thursday at New Delhi. The delegation included Shri Piyush Goyal, M.P., Shri Chintaman Vanga, M.L.A., Maharashtra State Fishermen's Co-operative Federation President Shri Rajendra Meher, Shri Ramdas Meher, Mumbai Councilor Smt. Manisha Chaudhari, Vasai-Virar Municipal Corporation Councilor Shri Rajan Naik, BJP Maharashtra State I.T. Cell Convener Shri Vinit Goenka. Senior Officers of the Agriculture Ministry were also present.

While giving further details Shri Ram Naik said, "The National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) gives loans to fishermen through State Government at approximately 13 percent interest. Finance Minister Shri Pranav Mukherjee in his Budget for the year 2012-13 has proposed that loans to farmers would be given at 7 percent and those repaying the installments in time would get a rebate of 3 percent. The effective loaning rate therefore works to 4 percent. Fishing is also considered 'on par' as 'farming on water'. We therefore demanded that fishermen should also get loan at 4 percent interest. Agreeing with the argument, Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar assured that he will impress upon the Finance Minister to grant loans to fishermen at 4 percent."

Along with rate of interest, the delegation also discussed the issue of development rebate on diesel. During the year 1990, Shri Ram Naik as an M.P. had raised the demand of exempting excise duty on diesel used by fishermen for their fishing boats. Conceding to the demand, the then Finance Minister Prof. Madhu Dandavate announced 'development rebate' of 35 paise per litre. Subsequently as the price of diesel increased, Shri Ram Naik as Petroleum Minister increased the development rebate to Rs.1.50 per litre. As diesel prices continued to increase

further, various fishermen's organizations demanded increase of development rebate to Rs.4. Responding to the demand, the Government of India announced on 19th February 2009, the increase of the development rebate to Rs.3 during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-8 to 2011-12). However, a condition was imposed that the development rebate would be available to fishermen below poverty line (BPL). The fact that there can be no BPL fisherman who owns a fishing boat was brought to the notice of the Agriculture Minister, the Finance Minister and also Prime Minister Dr Man Mohan Singh. However, the condition has not been withdrawn. As such fishermen are not getting development rebate for the last five years. The delegation therefore impressed upon the Agriculture Minister to come to the rescue of fishermen and sanction development rebate at Rs.4 per litre. Responding to the demand, Agriculture Minister assured that he will discuss the issue afresh with the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister and will try to revive the development rebate during 12th Five Year Plan beginning with 2012-2013.

Shri Ram Naik further added, "As the coastal water is getting highly polluted, fishermen do not get sufficient catch in the coastal waters i.e. upto 12 nautical miles. They therefore go in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for fishing. However, there is no law to regulate the activities, including conflicts of fishermen in EEZ. Agriculture Minister had informed by a letter dated 17th March 2009 that inter-ministerial consultations on the proposed legislation are under progress. When we asked the status of the legislation, the Agriculture Minister said that the work is stuck up with the Home Ministry. However, he assured that since this is a serious issue of law and order in the sea, he will personally take the initiative and find out a solution."

(Office Secretary)