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**Agri Minister Sharad Pawar to solve  
Fishermen's Problems: Ram Naik**

**Mumbai, Thursday:** "Efforts will be made to sanction the long pending rebate of Rs. 3 per litre of diesel which has been denied to the fishermen, also to provide loan at 4% interest as given to farmers and to pass a suitable legislation to ensure law and order in the economic zone in the sea", assured Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar to BJP leader Shri Ram Naik in a meeting held in Delhi on Wednesday. This information is given in a press statement issued by the office of Shri Ram Naik.

While explaining the details of the meeting, Shri Ram Naik further said, "Many agitations have taken place from time to time for the above demands, but no justice was given to fishermen. The rebate on diesel was increased Rs. 1.50 from 35 paise per litre during the tenure of Vajpayee government. In response to the demand to further increase the rebate upto Rs. 4, Manmohan Singh government fixed the rebate at Rs. 3, but with a condition to make it available only to fishermen below poverty line (BPL). In fact, the cost of a fishing boat itself is about Rs. 10-15 lakhs. Considering this, no fisherman who is having a fishing boat can ever be a BPL. As a result, not even a single fisherman could get the rebate in past 3 years. Shri Raj Shekhar, Jt. Secretary, who was present in the meeting confirmed. Agriculture Minister therefore promised to change the rule of the rebate."

"In addition, farmers are being provided loans at 4% interest. Since fishing is treated as 'Farming on Water', fishermen also should get the same facility. When we pointed out that this has been discussed in earlier meetings but the decision is not yet taken, Agriculture Minister promised to discuss the matter with Finance Minister and to extend the same facility to fishermen on priority", added Shri Ram Naik.

"There was also a long pending demand to pass a suitable legislation to solve critical law and order issues beyond 12 nautical miles in sea, especially in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Agriculture Ministry had earlier informed that the process to enact such a law has been commenced on 17th May 2009. We pointed out to Agriculture Minister that 4 years have been passed and yet the said act has not come into effect. Shri Sharad Pawar promised that he will discuss the matter with Law Minister Shri Kapil Sibbal since framing a bill falls under the jurisdiction of Law Ministry, and will try to expedite the process", stated Shri Ram Naik at the end.

**(Office Secretary)**