

**For favour of publicity**

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**'Declare Fish Famine & Reintroduce Diesel Rebate' : Ram Naik**

**Mumbai, Tuesday:** "The latest statement of Agriculture Minister Shri Sharad Pawar in the just concluded Fish Festival 'Matsyagandha' is serious enough and calls for positive and prompt action from him and the State Government to solve problems of Maharashtra fishermen. They should begin action by declaring fish famine and also by reintroduction of rebate on diesel," demanded Shri Ram Naik, former Petroleum Minister and Shri Rajan Meher, Convener, BJP Maharashtra Fishermen Cell.

While inaugurating the fish festival Shri Sharad Pawar stated that states like Gujrat, Andhram Kerala recorded fish growth development of six percent. However Maharashtra has a negative growth of six percent. Stating that we have earlier drawn the attention of State as well as Union Government over this sorry state of affairs, Shri Ram Naik said, "Both the Governments did not act in time. They should atleast compensate now by declaring a fish famine and sanction appropriate relief."

When Shri Ram Naik was the Petroleum Minister, he has increased the rebate on diesel from 35 paise to Rs. 1.50. "In view of increase in diesel prices, a demand was made to enhance the rebate. However Agriculture Minister Shri Pawar and Petroleum Minister Shri Murli Deora neglected the demand. Moreover they put salt on fishermen's wounds by announcing the increase upto Rs. 3, but with a proviso that the rebate would be available to fishermen Below Poverty Line (BPL). This amounted to withdrawal of the rebate because no BPL fishermen can own a boat which costs several lakhs. We therefore demand reintroduction of rebate by withdrawing BPL condition," stated Shri Naik and Shri Meher.

"The growth of fishing in Gujrat is particularly due to planned development of fishing harbours. We have been demanding for the last five years for fishing harbours in Maharashtra. However the State as well as the Union Government failed to act. Chief Minister Shri Prithviraj Chavan and Industry Minister Shri Narayan Rane were present in the function. We therefore demand prompt and proactive action for developing fishing harbours like Satpati, Arnala, Karanja, Devgad, Mirkarwada, Agardanda, Satharinate, Harne,etc.", said Shri Naik and Shri Meher.

"In view of the negative growth in Maharashtra, it is necessary to give a helping hand to fishermen. Fishing is called agriculture on sea. The fishermen should therefore get loan with four percent interest rate, like farmers. Similarly the subsidy for electricity used for ice factory should be increased from 40 paise to Rs. 1.40 per unit. It is necessary to implement CRZ rules judiciously. However the houses and land of fishermen should be protected. We will react on this issue only after seeing the revised rules, which Chief Minister has promised to receive in 15 days," added Shri Naik.

"The Matsyagandha festival is over now. We once again appeal that the action should come without further delay from both the Governments," said Shri Naik and Shri Meher at the end.

**(Office Secretary)**