

Fisher people's Assembly held

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KARACHI : Hundreds of fishermen at the "Fisher people's Assembly" Wednesday demanded the government to provide basic facilities to fishing villages of the coastal areas.

The "Fisher people's Assembly," organized by Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) in collaboration with ActionAid Pakistan (AAPk) at Karachi Press Club (KPC) was presided over by veteran author and journalist Shamsurul Haidry as a Speaker of the assembly. He was assisted by a panel comprising senior scholar Nazeer Memon and Adam Malik of AAPk.

Country Director of ActionAid Pakistan Ms. Rubina Saigol and PFF Chairperson Mohammad Ali Shah also attended the assembly.

The representatives of fishermen from various fishing villages presented their problems before the speaker. They said fishing villages along Karachi coast are devoid of even basic facilities like drinking water, education and health etc.

They said the defunct union councils and City District Government of Karachi (CDGK) had failed to provide facilities for the fisherfolk population of the city. Lack of drinking water, overflowing sewerage system, depleted roads and absence of education and health facilities are the proof of neglect by the authorities.

They pointed out that over exploitation of fishing resources by big fishing trawlers and urged the government to cancel licenses of foreign trawlers. They also underlined the need to ban destructive nets, which are destroying the fishing stocks in the sea. They also expressed concern over increasing pollution along the coast due to disposal of municipal and industrial waste into the sea and cutting of mangrove trees.

In his remarks, the Speaker of the Fisher people Assembly Shamsurul Haidry appreciated the fisher people, particularly women for their presentation about problems of fishing villages. He said it is pity that no attention is being paid to plight of fishermen, where as the rulers get their votes from these villages.

He said fishermen are facing a lot of problems, but no government has ever paid attention to solve those problems. He deplored that due to lack of any sustainable fishing policy, the problems of fishermen are multiplying.

He asked the candidates of the local government elections to take cognizance of plight of fishermen and hoped that after their success take interest in solution of fishermen's problems.

Speaking on the occasion, Nazeer Memon said that fishermen of entire coast are living their lives like animals as no facilities have been provided by the government. He deplored that millions of fishermen in Indus Delta region are thirsty because sweet water of Indus River is not coming most of the time during the year.

He said hundreds of thousands of Indus delta fishermen have migrated to other parts like Karachi because it has become difficult to live in coastal villages. He said the sea has intruded hundreds of thousands of agriculture land, which has destroyed the livelihood resources of people.

Earlier, PFF General Secretary Saeed Baloch welcomed the participants of the assembly and threw light on purpose of organizing the assembly.

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