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## **Karachi: KFHA resents 'FCS-backed' women rally at harbour**

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By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI, May 24: A large number of women members of fishermen community from various parts of Sindh, including Karachi, staged a peaceful rally at the Karachi Fish Harbour demanding construction of a separate jetty for small fishermen.

They assembled at the harbour at 11am and after staging the demonstration, marched up to the head office of the Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority where they raised slogans in support of their demand.

The demonstration was organised by the Pakistan Mahigir Tehrik (PMT), a movement of local fishermen living along the Sindh coast.

PMT convener Ms Zubaida Birwani, who led the rally, said that the small fishermen had been facing a lot of problems due to the absence of landing facility for their catch at the harbour. She pointed out that, at present, most of the available facilities were meant for the owners and operators of large boats while these facilities were being denied to the owners and operators of small- and medium-sized boats.

She said that owing to the situation, the small fishermen were forced to make makeshift arrangements that could serve as jetties. For the purpose, she pointed out, they had to raise structures of heavy stones which appeared to be highly dangerous. They would often lose their catch while landing on such a risky jetty, she added.

Ms Birwani also called on Haji Shafi Mohammad Jamot, a member of the Fishermen Cooperative Society's managing committee, and apprised him of the problems being faced by small fishermen.

When contacted, KFHA Managing Director Dr Mohammad Nawaz Baloch said that the Authority fully favoured construction of a separate jetty as it was a longstanding demand of the small fishermen. The matter, he added, was under consideration.

Expressing the hope that the issue would be resolved, Mr Baloch said he would soon be meeting representatives of small fishermen to sort out the same. He said all out efforts would be made to ameliorate the lot of fishermen community.

He, however, maintained that, at present, the KFHA was engaged in addressing some more important issues, including those relating meeting the requirements of European Union, one of the major importers of Pakistani seafood. In this context, he pointed out that steps were being taken to build peeling sheds at the harbour and conditions across it were being improved further.

In reply to a question, Mr Baloch said that efforts were also being made to sort out contentious issues to have a better working relationship with the FCS. However, he reiterated the stand that the FCS should clear KFHA dues outstanding against it to enable the Authority to could carry out its development works smoothly.

**FCS ROLE SLATED:** In an official press statement, the KFHA condemned the FCS for, what it claimed, organizing a rally of hired women and the labourers working at the harbour on Wednesday to exploit the situation.

Issued by the KFHA MD, the statement held the FCS responsible for creating hurdles in the way of improvement work at the harbour. He alleged that the banners displayed by the demonstrators had been prepared at the FCS office.

Mr Baloch maintained that millions of rupees of dues on account of the annual ground rent were outstanding against the FCS and non-payment of which was causing serious problems to the KFHA in executing various development works.

The statement said: "The FCS has become an encroacher on the KFHA land and it invariably made attempts to sabotage various steps taken by the KFHA to meet EU requirements."

Prior to the establishment of the KFHA, the FCS had been running the affairs of the harbour but had miserably failed. Therefore, as per a pre-condition of the European Economic Community, the KFHA was established as an autonomous body to run the harbour affairs in accordance with the prescribed rules and regulations, according to the statement.

Dr Nawaz Baloch said that a series of meetings for further expansion of the harbour and upgrading its standards as per the EU requirements had been held recently at the office of the Sindh chief secretary. Secretary Fisheries, DG

Marine Fisheries Department, EU representative Dr Mike Dillon and Mr Shujaat Qarni of the FCS had attended the meetings.

At one of the meetings, he recalled, the KFHA had been directed to take any legal measures against the FCS if it failed to clear the dues outstanding against it. "Alternatively, the KFHA shall give the auction halls to another party after completing the formalities," the meeting, according to the KFHA MD, had decided.