

July 15, 2020

Online rally rejects coal power plants; demands renewable energy projects

KARACHI: Participants of an online rally have demanded an end to coal power plants and other fossil fuel-based plants and promotion of alternative renewable energy.

The first online rally on Zoom was organized by Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum Wednesday, which was attended by affected people of power plants and civil society of Pakistan and abroad.

The participants were also shown video clips of Peoples Caravan against Thar coal and in favour of climate justice.

The participants carried banners and chanted slogans against coal and in favour of renewable energy.

Muhammad Ali Shah, chairman PFF, said that coal power plants were established at coastal belt of Sindh, which were running on imported coal.

He said that coastal coal power plants were threat to marine ecology, which affected creeks and forests of mangroves. "There will be huge destruction through them," he said.

Shah said that in Thar, coal reserves of 175 billion tons have been found and coal mining has been started, which was not in favour of both the humans and environment. Gorano reservoir has displaced several people, their pathways and grasslands.

Out of 13 blocks of Thar, work is continued over three blocks while affected people have not been compensated properly. This has also affected the environment. "Natural beauty of Thar is being jeopardized," he said.

In addition to coal mining, he said, water schemes were being developed to provide water to Thar coal plants that were also harming people and the environment.

Two dams at Nabisar and Vejhiar have already been constructed while two more dams are being developed in those areas, which would be connected to each other through a 62-kilometer pipeline.

Water for these schemes would be taken from Farsh Makhi canal, which is tail end of Nara Canal. "People of that area already don't get water for their agriculture. This water withdrawal will further affect the area," he said.

Shah said that they were not against the coal power plants only, they wanted promotion of alternative renewable energy. "Pakistan can generate 300,000 mw energy on wind and thousands of megawatts on solar energy," he said. "Thus, we will have no need to jeopardize natural beauty of Thar,"

He said that they were unable to come on streets due to COVID-19, but would continue their protest through online platforms.

Karamat Ali of PILER also addressed the rally and focused on alternative methods of power generation rather than coal and fossil fuel-based power plants.