

# Land reforms can avert food crisis, seminar told

By Our Staff Correspondent

HYDERABAD, April 14: Leaders of public opinion at a seminar on 'food crisis and role of political parties' here on Wednesday said that unless true land reforms are undertaken to empower peasantry and ensure food security, the present food crisis would continue to persist in the society.

It was organised by South Asia Partnership (SAP)'s Sindh chapter at a local hotel.

General Secretary, PPP, Sindh chapter, Taj Hyder advocated land reforms and management of water for better per-acre yield while disagreeing with speakers that only peasant revolution would solve problems. "We shouldn't wait for it. We should endeavour to ameliorate the lot of the peasantry", he said.

He was critical of Federal Shariat Court's judgment against land reforms and said scientific approach was needed instead of emotional one to address issues.

He said China was getting four times higher per-acre yield with good agricultural practices, but in Pakistan its quite contrary as every farmer is in debt.

He said that Sindh has to enter industrial era, therefore, every district has to prepare a report, listing respective industrial potential to end poverty.

Earlier, he had to listen to sharp criticism of the PPP government by nationalist leaders for pursuing policy of reconciliation and failure to

end corruption and offering nothing in constitutional package.

Sindh Taraqqi Pasand Party chairman Dr Qadir Magsi said Sindh used to be rich and people were never worried about food security. "They were producers of honey, milk, ghee, meat, livestock and crops. Today fishermen don't have access to fresh water sources as water bodies and lakes have been illegally occupied by influential people. Today we can't even serve a hen to guests," he said.

Yet, he said, Sindhis are branded as lazy notwithstanding the fact that they stood deprived of sources of livelihood.

It was due to greed of man who played havoc with nature that people are reaping what they had sown, he said. River Indus has lost its glory and water inflows downstream remained nil to check sea intrusion with the result that agricultural land of coastal areas had been hit badly, he said.

Secondly, he said, Sindh is home to illegal immigrants which put additional burden on already shrinking food resources. People need to take stock of the situation to save their existence, he said.

Awami Tehrik chairman Ayaz Latif Palijo targeted the PPP government and its ministers, saying they were interested only in new models of four-wheel vehicles.

The government is still taking refuge behind theory that

they had inherited problems and telling people that change is gradually taking place, he said, adding that nothing has changed as the 18th amendment offers nothing.

Even Article-4, which should have been amended to strike down parallel legal system of jirgas had not been touched, he said.

He said that government failed to suspend work on Greater Thal Canal, saying massive work had been done.

The PPP has government in centre and president belonged to it yet its ministers were seeking Allah's help for water by showering flowers on dry riverbed, he said.

He said that Sindh contributed 71 per cent of the country's gas production and 22 per cent of oil. He said that if Punjab could stop supply of water downstream then Sindh could suspend supply of gas and fuel to upcountry.

He said that in 1945 water share of Sindh and Punjab was equal but now Punjab's share has increased while that of Sindh remained same.

Shah Mohammad Shah of the Save Sindh Movement said that Pakistan was always ruled by a certain class which protects its own interests and present coalition government also represented that class because their interests were the same.

SAP's Tahseen, Jeay Sindh Mahaz (J) vice chairman, Khaliq Junejo and PML-N's Afzal Gujjar also spoke on the occasion.