

Boat rally held to protest twin islands project

Monday 13 November 2006, by [SANGHUR Aziz](#) (Date first published: 13 November 2006).

KARACHI: More than 2,000 fishermen on 300 fishing boats participated in a boat rally Sunday to protest the allotment of twin islands to a Dubai-based company.

The fishermen, supported by political parties and NGOs, started the rally from Ibrahim Haidery. They were chanting slogans and carrying banners inscribed with slogans against the project. The participants, including a large number of women and children, reached Bundal island and offered fateha at mausoleum of Yusuf Shah. The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum had organized the rally at the occasion of 552nd Urs of Hazrat Yusuf Shah of Bundal, popularly known as 'saint of fishermen'.

Speaking on the occasion, political leaders and representative of fishermen vowed to resist the twin islands project. Prominent among the speakers were Muhammad Ali Shah, head of Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), Shafi Muhammad Jamot, Zubaida Barwani, Hakeem Zangejo, general secretary of Awami Tahrik Sindh and Ali Hasan Chandio, central leader of Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party.

"The government is usurping our source of livelihood and we would sacrifice our lives to save it," Rehmat Bibi, 90, told Daily Times. "This is our country," she said and added that her ancestors are buried at the island. Rehmat said that she had worked as a fisher woman but now she usually visits the island to attend the annual festival.

Hanif, a fisherman, said that his great grandfather, Easo Hamid Rakhio, was buried near mausoleum of Yusuf Shah. He pointed out that young fishermen visit the mausoleum before starting their career as fishermen.

Local women had set up stalls of handicrafts and food items. They were staying in 'make-shift houses' along with their family members.

Kalsoom, an old woman, said that they usually live on the island on Shawal 18 and 19 each year.

In September 2006, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz had approved in principle the development of Diamond Bar Island City on Buddo and Bundal islands (Dingi and Bhundaar in Sindhi) at a cost of \$43.135 billion.

A Dubai-based company 'Emmar' would develop residential, commercial and leisure projects, industrial parks, free trade zone and port terminals over 12,000 acres. The islands would be connected with Defence Phase-8 through a 1.5 kilometers long bridge costing around \$50 million.

PFF President Muhammad Ali Shah told journalists that fishermen were seriously concerned over possible loss of their livelihood, obstruction of passage to the open sea, destruction of mangrove forests and destruction of marine life and environment.

He said that thousands of fishermen would be deprived of their livelihood. He pointed out that fishermen use sea area between DHA's reclaimed land and Buddo Island as a passage to the open sea. But the project would deny them a passage to the open sea.

Mangrove forests serve as nurseries of fish and prawns, besides protecting the environment, Shah said and added these forests also protect Karachi from natural disasters. The mangrove forests adjacent to the twin islands would not survive after development of the new city.

He said that 300 MGD untreated waste of Karachi is also thrown into the sea, which has threatened sea life.

PFF Secretary General Saeed Baloch said that the construction of the new city would result in complete destruction of the marine life. He claimed that Diamond Bar Island City is not 'development' but a 'disaster' as it would benefit few 'powerful lobbies' at the cost of thousands of poor people.

P.S.

* From Daily Times, 13 novembre 2006 :

http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C11%5C13%5Cstory_13-11-2006_pg12_1