

Fishermen barred from fishing on Bundal, Buddo islands

Federal occupation' of twin islands

Political parties back strike call

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By our correspondent

KARACHI: Sindh's nationalist and democratic parties have appealed to the people of the province to observe a complete shutter-down strike on January 10 (Wednesday) to record their protest against the "federal occupation" of Sindh's twin islands - Bundal (Bhundhar) and Buddo (Dingi).

A consultative meeting of various parties, called by Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) at Sachal Hall, Ibrahim Hyderi, on Saturday afternoon, resolved to launch a joint political struggle to save these islands.

Representatives of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf, Awami Tehreek, National Workers Party, Jeay Sindh Mahaz, Sindh National Front, Sindh National Party, Sindh National Congress, Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM), Sindh Taraqi Pasand Party (STP) and Jeay Sindh Qaumarast Party participated in the meeting.

In a joint statement issued after the meeting, these parties appealed to the people to observe province-wide strike on Jan 10 to say "no" to "federal occupation" of Sindh's twin islands and other resources. They also called upon their workers to show full strength on the day. It was agreed that the heads of political parties would visit the twin islands on January 20, besides participating in a walk against the construction of new city at the same place.

Participants warned the Dubai-based company Emmar, which has undertaken the development work of the new city on the twin islands, that it should not indulge itself in this controversial project, "as it would prove nothing but a loss to its investment".

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson PFF Mohammad Ali Shah said that until Sindh's political parties come into action, the fishermen could not save the islands alone. Soon after forced migration of fishermen from the twin islands, the fishermen had been barred from fishing and cleaning their nets near these islands, he added.

Shah said that the people of Sindh were protesting against the construction of Kalabagh dam, whereas the rulers were threatening them by announcing to construct more dams on Indus.

Saleem Zia of PML (N), supporting the strike call, alleged that the occupation of twin islands was

part of a long-term conspiracy to convert Sindhis into a minority. He cited examples of partition of Hyderabad Division and removal of Sindhi villages from Karachi.

Zia warned the regime to stop oppressing the people as there has already been too much killings in Waziristan and Balochistan.

Haji Shafi Mohammad Jamote, Director Fishermen Cooperative Society (FCS), denied the allegations that his brother was involved in a contract to initiate work on the twin islands.

He said none from his family was involved in any kind of contract with the government, adding that such stories were an attempt to sabotage the struggle of the fishermen.

Last year, the federal government allowed Emmar through a memorandum of understanding to develop "Diamond Bar Island City" on the twin islands. The company has pledged to invest \$43 billion on the project.

Fishermen barred from fishing on Bundal, Buddo islands

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January 8, 2007

By Shahid Shah

KARACHI: Celebrations of New Year, Eid-ul-Azha, and Christmas brought nothing but sorrow to their lives, as long before the inauguration of "Diamond Bar Island City" on the twin islands of Bundal (Bhundhar) and Buddo (Dingi), fishermen of the coastal belt have been denied their historic right of fishing around these islands.

The fishermen's entry has been forbidden on these islands, Mohammad Ali Shah, chairperson Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), told The News on Thursday.

He said the New Year became horrible for the fishermen, as they have been barred from fishing since Eid and the first day of 2007.

Both the islands served as seasonal grounds for fishermen of Ibrahim Hyderi, Rehri Mian, Chashma Village and other surroundings, who fished around these islands in Korangi and Phitti creeks and cleaned their nets on comparatively less polluted beaches.

A few fishermen, including a permanent resident couple Ms. Raheemi and Adoo, lived on Bundal Island. Others were forced to migrate while the couple still lives there as they said they would rather prefer death to migration.

The federal government signed an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with a Dubai-based construction company, 'Emmar', for development of a model city on the twin islands early last year. The agreement inflamed the fishermen who foresaw a loss to their livelihood.

Last month, the armed personnel started leveling of the land, more than 50 huts were removed and

fishermen were forced to migrate resulting in injuries to four civilians.

The company will invest US\$43 billion on the construction of the new city, which includes construction of luxury apartments, hotels, and a golf club.

Fishermen, the major stakeholders, voiced their reservations in the early stages, saying that the new city would jeopardise their livelihood. Firstly, Korangi Creek serves as their outlet into the open sea between the reclaimed land of Defense Housing Authority and the islands would become out of bounds for them for security reasons. Secondly, mangrove forests, which serve as breeding grounds for fish and prawn and come under the estimated 12,000 acres of land, would be eliminated. Thirdly, the wastage of the new city would further pollute the sea environment resulting in depletion of the fish resources.

The Sindh government as well as the federal government recently said they would consult the stakeholders but no contact has yet been made with their representatives. "Nobody from the government has contacted me," said Shah, the fishermen's leader.

Fishermen were not taken into confidence at any level whether it was the signing of the MoU or beginning the process of the leveling of the land.

Shah said they opposed the construction because development had not proved beneficial for the fishermen. "Gizri is an example," he said.

He said after construction of DHA phase-VIII, the fishermen got nothing, only their women work as domestic help in the bungalows.

Shah added that construction of Marina and Creek Clubs deprived the Gizri-fishermen of fishing, who sold the boats. "Some of them fish on Clifton shore with nets," he said.

Province-wide strike on 10th

http://www.thenews.com.pk/daily_detail.asp?id=37745

January 8, 2007

By our correspondent

KARACHI: A Sindh-wide shutter-down strike is to be observed on January 10 against the construction of "Diamond Bar Island City" on twin islands of Bundal and Buddo.

Almost all nationalist parties of Sindh, in addition to the Pakistan People's Party (Parliamentarians), Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, have supported the call given by the fishermen.

Mohammad Ali Shah, Chairperson, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), gave the strike call while presiding over an All-Parties Conference (APC) on December 20. He was given the mandate by the leaders of the PPPP and the nationalist parties to issue the call.

Sami Memon, media coordinator, PFF, told The News that a meeting of the concerned parties would be held at Sachal Hall, Ibrahim Hyderi, on Saturday afternoon to finalise the future strategy and

matters related to the strike.

He said leaders of PPPP, MMA, PML (N) and nationalist parties had confirmed their participation.

Mohammad Ali Shah said that he personally had an individual dialogue with several leaders of the political parties who supported the strike call.

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