

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **SECURITY CONCERNS COMPEL MORMUGAO PORT TRUST (MPT) TO CLOSE KHAREWADO JETTY**

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The recent Mumbai terrorist attacks have exposed the relatively ineffective and weak security alongwith the long Indian Coast Line. Some of the vulnerable landing points used by terrorists, smugglers, subversive elements, and similar anti-national elements, are the fish landing points at various locations throughout the 6500 kms and odd Coast of the country.

Khariwado fishing jetty at Vasco Beach and Bay, almost within arm's length from Berth No.11 of Mormugao Port Trust is a major security threat to vital port installations as well as International and Indian Merchant Ships calling at Mormugao Harbour. Its existence has all through been a matter of serious concern for the port authorities and the Union Government. Captains of visiting international merchant ships have repeatedly expressed concerns on the prevailing grave insecurity due to the operations of

large number of fishing trawlers and boats at touching distance from their ships, even when they are at berth. Merchant ships have time and again drawn attention of the Port Authorities to the criss-crossing of fishing trawlers, boats and canoes, on the port navigational channel when the ships enter or leave the port. They have been reporting to the international shipping community, that their ships are in extremely insecure condition while at Mormugao Port, due to the existence of the large number of fishing boats and trawlers alongside. Many a time, the khariwado fishermen cast their nets and carry out fishing in Port Operational waters, which has been strongly recommended to be prohibited forthwith by the Indian Coast Guard and Navy.

There have been innumerable instances of thefts and pilferages from MPT premises due to the existence of the fishing jetty and kharewado slums contiguous to MPT's operational areas. Instances of Pakistani seamen employed on International Merchant Ships being ferried by kharewado fishing trawlers and boats to the shore have been frequently reported, even though this is expressly prohibited as per the laws of the land.

Kharewado slums are notorious for smuggling and illegal activities since the last 30 years or so. Their immediate proximity to the fishing jetty supports the strong likelihood of the kharewado fishing jetty being used for illegal and anti national activities. Fishing trawlers and boats not belonging to the Goa Fishing Boats Owners Association (GFBOA) have been reported to be berthing at the jetty. These have often been found to be carrying alleged fishermen and others without any proper identification documents.

With the coming into force of the International Ships and Ports Facility Code (ISPS) from 2004 onwards, MPT runs the risk of losing its traffic of Merchant Ships due to the very existence of the khariwado fishing jetty within Vasco Bay. The ISPS Code is a mandatory legal provision, necessarily to be complied with, by Ports where international merchant ships call. If the international shipping community finds MPT to be non-compliant with the ISPS Code, international merchant ships will stop calling at the Port altogether. This would be a national disaster and major blow to the trade and commerce of Goa in particular, and to the economy of the nation in general.

After the American Naval Ship “*USS Cole*” was hit by an explosives laden barge by terrorists in 2001, the USA has made it abundantly clear that US registered merchant ships, as well as US naval ships, will not call at international ports which fail to comply with the ISPS Code. Similar stand has been taken by all other developed countries. With the heightened stress on proper implementation of the ISPS Code throughout the world, all Indian Ports, including Mormugao Port, have to take steps for full compliance in all respects.

Very recently, security agencies all over the country, the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Home Ministry – Union Government, Directorate General (Shipping), which is the statutory authority charged with the responsibility of implementing the ISPS Code, various committees set up by the Government for improving security and safety measures at Indian Ports, and a number of other bodies, have recommended immediate relocation of the khariwado fishing jetty outside Vasco Bay, if MPT wishes to obtain the certificate of proper compliance with the ISPS Code. Consequent upon these recommendations and findings, and keeping in view the fact that merchant shipping activity at MPT is the life line of the Goan economy, MPT has been

making consistent efforts to persuade the khariwado fishing community, the khariwado slum dwellers, and most importantly the State Government, to identify a mutually acceptable alternate location for construction of a world class fishing jetty for the khariwado fishermen. Keeping in view its social responsibilities, Mormugao Port has offered to construct the relocated new *state of the art* fishing jetty entirely at the expense of the Central Government and MPT itself. The entire work of planning, designing, obtaining statutory and regulatory clearances like environment clearance, funding, actual construction of the jetty, reclamation of land, and a host of other activities, has been undertaken to be done by the MPT itself, even though all these activities are outside the scope of the normal port operations and activities, and are really the responsibility of the Government of Goa. Interestingly, while the Goa Port is upgrading the Malim, Betul, Cortalim and Chapora fishing jetties, no attention has been paid to the khariwado jetty. Significantly, only MPT has gone out of its way till now to consistently maintain and provide all facilities at the kharewado jetty. This will no longer be possible in view of the serious security threat.

Moreover, for many years now, MPT has been unable to proceed further in its stated objective of constructing a world class fishing jetty for the khariwado fishermen, simply because the State Government has not given its approval to an alternate location. At one stage, MPT had obtained all the clearances, other than the Government of Goa approval, including funding of Rs.15 crores for construction of the new fishing jetty at Gina Penta Chicalim. However, only because the State Government did not give its consent to the proposed location, MPT had to shelve the project. Now, the likely cost of the new fishing jetty is in the region of Rs.35 crores. The Central Government and MPT are willing to bear this entire huge cost. MPT is willing to offer any suitable site within MPT limits, outside Vasco Bay, for the new jetty. It may not be out of place to mention that MPT will be giving away a large and valuable water area of its own for the jetty.

Once again, the absence of the requisite sanction of the State Government is the only obstacle to the construction of the new jetty.

MPT has also offered to bear the beneficiary cost for each residential unit, the contribution of the urban local body, which in this case is the Mormugao Municipal Council

(MMC), the unit cost difference, the consultant's cost, and other expenses and costs necessary to be incurred for rehabilitating and relocating the khariwado slum dwellers under the Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) of the Ministry of Urban Poverty Alleviation, New Delhi. Under this scheme, all the present khariwado slum dwellers, who are essentially encroachers as they have constructed unauthorized structures in violation of CRZ Regulations on MPT land at Vasco Beach, Vaddem and other coastal areas, will be given legitimate modern flats of their own at Adarshnagar land acquired by MPT for rehabilitating its Project Affected Persons. Thus, after their relocation and rehabilitation, the quality of life of the khariwado slum dwellers and others would improve substantially, and they would have houses with proper legal ownership. Again this Project for rehabilitating the khariwado slum dwellers to Adarshnagar is held up for want of the 'No Objection' from the Mormugao Municipal Council and the State Government. MPT is willing to offer Adarshnagar land valued at over Rs. 20 crores for this project.

Looking to the urgency of the situation; the continued security threat to MPT; and the absence of the requisite

approval of the GoG for the new location, MPT is constrained to stop the operations of the khariwado jetty completely. Consequently, all the recurring costs incurred by MPT for years now in keeping the khariwado jetty operational, including payment of electricity bills of the khariwado jetty, continued permission for operation of the diesel dispensing unit at khariwado, etc., will have to be stopped forthwith. Incidentally, till now MPT has been bearing the cost of the innumerable illegally tapped connections of electricity from the khariwado fishing jetty, with a view not to deprive the khariwado fishermen of this important facility. However, such misuse cannot be allowed to continue for too long now.

MPT had convened a High Level Meeting on 16/1/2009 to resolve this relatively simple issue. However, the concerned authorities and GFBOA did not attend. MPT has again convened a High Level Meeting on 3/2/2009, in which, senior Ministers of the GoG have been requested to attend alongwith the representatives of the GFBOA, GBOA and other constituents of MBA. All that MPT desires is the go ahead from the State Government, with absolutely zero financial implications, for the alternate site outside Vasco Bay, but within MPT limits, for starting the construction of

the new Jetty. Once the new location is found mutually acceptable, MPT can plan how best the fishing activities of the kharewado fishermen can continue, till they shift to the new jetty after its completion.

We must ask ourselves what is it in our system of governance that prevents those having power and authority to take actions, which are clearly for the benefit of individuals, community at large, and the nation. If the above proposals for bringing about qualitative improvement in the livelihood of the people of Vasco, and providing better living conditions for their families, can remain pending for so long, may be it is necessary for administrators and leaders to take a serious relook at their styles of functioning. We are also left wondering whether there is any concern at all for the integrity and security of the nation.