

# Coastline to development

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While the organisers were happy with the response to the Sea Festival 2003 in Karachi last week, the general public thought a lot more could have been done to make the event more attractive

**By Rubina Jabbar**

**F**un-starved Karachiites expected exciting sea sports, game shows and a face to face with marine life at the recent Sindh Sea Festival 2003 from February 21-23, 2003. But, said a visitor, "I was greatly disappointed. It was like any other fun mela."

But the organisers maintained the festival had generated sufficient public interest and had helped to highlight

the objective it was held for — developing the coastline.

Organised by B&H International, an event management company, in collaboration with the Government of Sindh and the City District Government Karachi, the idea of this festival was to develop the coastline. And, "We chose blind dolphin as the mascot," said Fahd Omair Siddiqui, manager Administration, B&H International. He added that the event was organised on 'no-profit no-loss basis'.

Talking to *TNS* while the festival entered its third day,

Managing director of the company, Zoheb Hassan said, "Given the situation in Karachi we have done quite well. The turnout has been 10,000 to 15,000 a day. It goes to show that people welcome such events." He expected about 50,000 visitors on the third day.

The attendance on the first two days of the show was affected because of the sombre public mood in the wake of the Kohat Fokker tragedy.

Raissa Zubair brought her four children to the festival looking for submarines, and

to get some information on marine life. But she left rather unsatisfied. "Except for para-jump and life-saving demo by the Navy helicopter no other item was impressive," she said. The family missed the PAF carnival being held the same day as part of the festival.

"The show offered nothing for civilians; unlike the families of armed forces who were offered a discount on Rs. 25 entry ticket for adult and Rs. 10 for child visitor. Children were charged Rs. 20 for spending five minutes on the

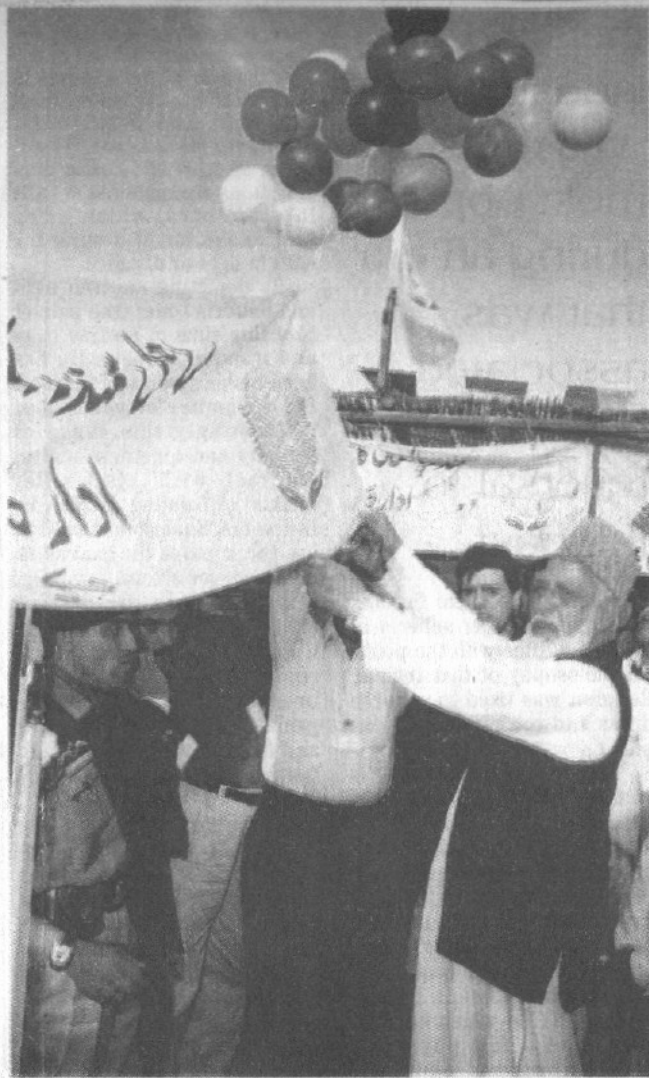
slide and Rs. 10 for a ride the bouncing castle," she said.

Visitors also said the food stalls set up at the festival had hardly anything to serve and cold drinks and mineral water was not available.

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machine was not working," said Raissa Zubair.

A majority of visitors at the Sindh Wildlife Department stall was school-children. They showed interest in stuffed animals, and bought caps, shirts, stickers, greeting cards and posters of wildlife and endangered species. "About 500 students have visited the stall on this final day," said Fahmida Firdous of the Project Office of Marine Turtle Project, Sindh Wildlife Department. "We've sold about 60 posters, each costing Rs 10."

This stall was set up to give education, information and publicity on wildlife and endangered species like marine green turtle through the exhibited material. Fahmida Firdous said, "Children showed interest in stuffed animals and asked odd questions. I feel we should have brought in more free publicity material."

Placed in a corner, the stall of Marine Fisheries Department, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, showcased different species of fish, and marine life, along with a clay statue of a Sindhi fisherman

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in a wooden boat.

The Sindh Pavilion of the Culture and Tourism Department, Government of Sindh, located near the entrance displayed a few handicraft items like caps, block-printed suit pieces, *chadars*, cushion covers, wall hangings, bed sheets and earthen ware.

The price of a double-bed sheet ranged from Rs. 6,500 to Rs. 8,000, and of block-printed shalwar kameez suit Rs. 450, *gaj* Rs. 150 and plain earthen pot Rs.10. One of the stall holders said most

of their stock had been sold out at the Basant festival in Lahore and they did not have sufficient time in between to prepare a fresh stock for this festival.

Gopal Das from Hutongo, Tehsil Khipro in District Tharparkar, could sell only eight pieces of handicraft over three days of the festival. "I've displayed my stuff at exhibitions in Islamabad and Lahore, and had won an award by the Lok Virsa in 1986," he said.

The work of some four vocational schools from Korangi was also displayed by the Socio-Economic Centre, and Community Development Department (Social Welfare Wing) of the City District Government Karachi (CDGK). Decoration pieces made of beads, wax and wood sticks and pot painting and hand embroidered shalwar kameez suit pieces were prominent among the items on sale.

The stall of Sindh Tourism Department tried to attract visitors by putting up photographs of historical sites, and selling books and brochures on Sindh's tourist sites. They were able to register a sale of only Rs. 300 — which will contribute to publishing books. "For instance, two or three books are published with money earned at the *urs* of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai."

PAF Yacht Club, Korangi Creek Club, NBCD Fire Fighting School, Karachi Scuba Diving Centre also had stalls at the pavilion.

Karachi city nazim Naimatullah Khan, who was the chief guest on the opening and concluding day, said that in order to provide recreational facilities to Karachiites and to attract tourists the CDGK was planning amusement parks and developing the 500 kilometers-long coastline. For the purpose, the administration was mobilising overseas Pakistanis and local industrialists to invest in these projects.