

The Prospects of Coastal Area

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Although there are endless possibilities in the coastal region of 710 km along the sea line in the south of Bangladesh, there is not much development due to multi-faceted obstacles. Due to storms, cyclones and other types of natural disasters along with limited resources allocation, the prospects of various sectors in coastal region are not seeing the face of light.

The existing sources of information inspires that there are huge possibilities of agro based farming and industries in the coastal region, for example, cultivation of shrimp, salt, production of dry fish, oyster, pearls, even the growth of domestic animals and dairy farms. The projects could be domain-based where agriculture dependent industries will be formulated. In addition to this, there is an excellent scope of transportation and coastal tourism. As the possibilities of mineral soils of the sea-beaches are prevalent, beneath the sea there is also present unending wealth. This wealth not only represents the coast's sustainable possibilities of development but also they indicate huge potential for Bangladesh. However due to different hassles, these scopes remains explored.

It has been known that the pile of the alluvium makes the coastal soils more fertile. Various types of crops are grown in the coastal islands formed in the rivers. Different type of people in own initiatives build up projects focusing on agriculture for livelihood. Some people are taking the risk to cultivate shrimp and fish. According to the people concern of those agricultural projects, they need more support from governmental and nongovernmental organization.

While talking about the potentialities of the shoreline, Anowar Hossein the inhabitant of Rahmatpur of the old island Swandip of Chattogram said 'the silver sea fishes are the reason for peace of the fishermen, and the golden rice is the reason of happiness for the farmers. Nature has developed a perfect relationship with the potential of the coast. Thousands of people who struggle on the coast are looking for a way to live with deficiencies and hope of possibilities. But they also face danger in every step of life.

Khalilur Rahman, a fisherman of South Sakuchia of Manpura island of Bhola, summarized, 'the People who survive by fighting with nature only look for

possibilities. They try their best to provide food in their family. But they use to suffer extremely. There is no scope to lead a nice life in terms of using natural resources. These coastal people always looking forward for the governmental assistance for the survivability of their live.



The same picture emerges in conversations with professionals at different levels about the potential of the coast. In the meantime of conversation, most of the people told that there was hardly initiative to raise coastal development. The law and provisions regarding this issue were not implemented yet. Many people said that no hopeful ventures were seen yet even though there was available the governmental and nongovernmental information.

From the utterances of the local people, it is learnt that fish is the main wealth of the sea and seashore. More than million people in coastal area are directly or indirectly related to fishing. However, it is difficult to overcome various hurdles in fishing at sea. The marginalized coastal fishermen face technological as well as economic problems in their life.

Sikandar Ali who is a fisherman of Kolapara said, 'we have to go for fishing by taking loan from the money lenders. They will not take the responsibilities of our family if we are endangered by the storm or die because of the attack of the

robbers. We face difficulties to repay the money of the landers. If we want to repay the lender's money, we have to go for fishing in the river or sea by taking risks of life and denying all the fears.'

Though fish contributes significantly in the economy of the country but, proper management of this sector is not much visible. It is prohibited to catch fish from 1st March to 30th April every year. In terms of this prohibition, the small fishes get the scope to grow bigger. Again, from 25th October to 10th November, Hilsa catching is banned. Even though at the prohibited time of fishing the fishermen are supposed to get rehabilitation, most of the fishermen do not get such assistance. It is reported that both "Bihundi" and "Ber" net destroy the carps. Besides different types invalid nets are confiscated during special expedition. If the use of net is banned, the growth of fishes will be high and a great potentiality regarding fish will be seen.

Drying fish is another sector in coastal region. Although the coastal region is familiar with dry fishes, there is no sustainable development regarding this matter. In the winter season, the coastal regions are overflowed by the production of dry fishes. The raw materials come from the trawlers. Several locality of dry fishes have been built up in Najirer Tekof Cox's Bazar, Maheshkali of Sonadia, Bashkhali of Chattogram, Kuakata of Patuakhali, and in Dublar Char of Bagerhat. The workers remain busy in processing dry fish when they get available fishes from the river or sea. Again, if they do not get a sufficient amount of fish from the river or sea, the workers of the dry fish processing in the locality face the problem of unemployment. As a result, some people have to move to another profession.

The people who are related to dry fish processing and marketing inform that hundreds of hassles are prevalent in this sector. According to them, not only an environmental problem but marketing problem is also predominant.

Sometimes, they do not get a sufficient amount of money; sometimes they have to face extortions in the ghats (riverside markets) while transporting the dry fishes. Increasing the production of dry fish is very challenging overcoming these barriers.

The cultivation of salt is found in the eastern part, especially in Cox's Bazar, Chokoria, Maheshkhali, Kuthubdia, Teknaff, and Bashkhali. Most places are used for salt cultivation in a field. The cultivation of rice or other crops might be seen only in a small corner of these large fields. The farming of salt is continuing by generation after generation. People cultivate salt by taking a land lease or in their own fields. There is a huge possibility in this industry. However, there is no endeavor of the concerned authorities to promote the development of this sector.

In line with laws a policy guideline has been prepared in 2005 for the development of coastal area. In act 4.1 of the policy, investment in the cultivation of sea fish, salt, dry fish, shrimp, crab, oyster, pearl, growth of the domestic animal, regional agricultural development, agricultural industry, transport, building ships, breaking ships, tourism, collecting the mineral of the sea beach, and take benefits from the renewable and unrenueable powers have been identified for sustainable development of the coastal inhabitants. The implementation of this policy will be visible at that time when the concerned authorities will be more concerned and active.

The Cultivation of Crab is Increasing

Although the cultivation of shrimp is profitable, there remain lots of risks. For this reason, the big girdle owners have started cultivating crabs besides the cultivation of shrimp. The crabs are being cultivated in the farms utilizing different procedures in Paikghacha of Khulna, Debhata of Sathkhira, Kaliganj, Shamnagar, Tala, Patkelghata, and including Asasuni's Budhata to many



other places. The farmers informed that by investing 150,000 takas, it is possible to earn 500,000 takas from 5 bighas of field through farming of crab, while it is tough to earn 500,000 takas profit from shrimp by investing 2,000,000 takas in the 100 bighas of field.

The crab growers informed that using the fattening process in a pond it is possible to cultivate 900 kg-1000 kg of crabs. Crabs can be farmed throughout the whole year. An exportable crab has a weight of 200-250 gm. The crabs from Sundarbans and girdles are directly sent to Dhaka. From Dhaka, these are exported to foreign countries. Before piling up in trucks, the crabs are gathered at first in local storehouses. There these are classified into different grades according to their sizes. Then, from the storehouse, these crabs are taken to the truck and finally exported to the foreign lands. This is the regular scene of the Paikghacha of Sundarbans. The internationally demanded crabs are collected from Sundarbans and different girdles. Due to the increasing derriand for crabs. in international markets, the number of crab cultivators are increasing.

Along with the market of crabs in Paikghacha, we talked with the cultivators of the crabs of Paikgacha and the different villages of Koira. They told us that once upon a time the crabs were collected only from Sundarbans, but now many people choose their profession as crab cultivators. In this region, the collection of crab is rapidly increasing. Everyday about 5 tons of crabs are being transported to Dhaka from Paikgacha.

The seawater center of Paikgacha demonstrates that from an economic perspective, the crabs secured the exported position after the place of exported fishes. At the very beginning of the 90s, the research study has been started in the Fish Research Institute of Bangladesh regarding crab fattening from seawater to pond. Then, the techniques are applied in the farming procedure which has been learned from the research. Meanwhile, the international market of the "Shila crab" of this particular region has been expanded. The specialists said that this Shila crab which has been found in Khulna can live in the 2 PPT sea environments. But they cannot survive more than 70 PPT. This type of crab is

prevalent in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Patuakhali, Barisal, Satkhira, Khulna, Noakhali, Maheshkhali, Kutubdia, Sandip, and Dublar Char of Sundarbans in Bangladesh, but it is more available in Khulna and Sundarbans region.

According to the Fish Research Institute, the crabs are eligible to give eggs from 18-20 months of ages. Baishakh-Jaisto is their breeding season. The female crabs which have 200-250 weights are eligible to give 850,000-1,500,000 eggs. It takes 35-40 days to turn as crabs from the eggs. In a crab, the amount of protein is 19% to 24%, fat is 6%, carbohydrate is 2% to 3%, and mineral is 71% to 74% which are expecting to enrich the food value.