

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **A REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON “TOURISM AND FISHERMEN COMMUNITY OF KUAKATA” ORGANIZED BY THE STUDY TEAM**

The study team organized a seminar entitled "Tourism and Fishermen Community of Kuakata" on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2002 at 60 No. Latachapli Govt. Primary School. Mr. Tusar Kanti Roy, Research Assistant of the project presented the keynote paper in the seminar. A number of fishermen, tourism promoters (hotel owners and managers), local newsmen of *Kuakata* and Kalapara, members and representatives of Latachapli Union Parishad, participants from Local Civil Society, School teachers, NGO representatives attended the seminar. All the participants openly discussed various aspects and issues related to the problems and prospects of tourism and fishermen community of *Kuakata*. They suggested a number of measures for improvement of the disadvantaged fishermen community and promotion of tourism at *Kuakata*.

#### **Objectives of the seminar**

- To disseminate the findings of this research and exchange ideas and views with the participants
- To verify the collected data on tourism and fishermen community of Kuakata To find out the problems and prospects of the fishermen community and *Kuakata* by open discussion with the fishermen community, tourism promoters, other stakeholders, local representatives and the civil society.
- To identify the measures for development of the fishermen community and promote tourism at *Kuakata*.

#### **Discussion and Results**

##### **Problems of the Fishermen Community at Kuakata**

Fishermen have so many problems. Inadequacy of shelters, insecurity in fishing ground, social insecurity, natural disasters (cyclone, storm and tidal surge,) inadequacy of fishing boats and gears, inadequacy of education, medical, drinking water and sanitary latrines, inadequacy of loan facilities, exploitation by dadandars/money investors etc. are the main problems of the fishermen community of Kuakata.

Ignorance of the fishermen towards maintaining a healthy life while staying in the sea is another problem. They can not bath for a long many days which makes them dirty and they often become sick.

Staying in the sea for a long time in extreme cold and heat (in continuous rain and sunshine; continuous sound of engines, unbearable waves of the sea, uncertain storm and rain, in isolation from the family members etc.) increases health risks and can create mental illness. During their stay in the sea, they drink very little water due to inadequacy of pure drinking water. This has a dehydrating effect on their health.

Sometimes they have to dive in the salty seawater to release the net from sea or to make it free from any obstacle or barriers. This creates skin diseases. In most cases, the fishermen are not able to take a balanced diet which makes them physically tired and they gradually lose their energy to work There is lack of primary medical facilities in some fishing boats. For this reason, if one becomes sick incidentally, he is deprived from all medical services.

The fishermen are frequently victimized by robbers while fishing in the sea. The robbers often forcibly occupy all the resources (nets, fishes, money, boat etc.) and the fishermen get lost and helpless. Sometimes, after severely beating them they throw the fishermen into the sea. Some of the fishermen are found to be physically disabled by the torture of the robbers and died. This is a very common phenomenon in the area. Most of the fishermen have to face such problems.

The villagers feel insecure due to presence of local and outside terrorists in the village. Their daily earnings are sometimes forcibly taken by the terrorist in dark nights. Natural calamities (storm, tidal surge) are the problems faced by the fishermen community. Exploitation by naval security forces/gaurds and extortion by officials of the forest department is very common. Illness, tearing of nets, engine disorder are the other problems faced by the fishermen.

The present signal light of the lighthouse of Kuakata is not high. It is not visible from a long distance. It is a problem for the fishermen to identify Kuakata from a long distance.

The fishermen have lack of training on safety in fishing in the sea. There are inadequate cyclone shelters at Kuakata. There are only a few co-operatives and youth clubs in the villages that may work for the socioeconomic and cultural development of people. Most of the villages are have no electricity. The fishermen community has lack of adequate capital for smooth running of fishing and fishery related business. There is no health complex in Latachapli Union and Kuakata too. The people have to suffer a lot due to absence of health care service and facilities.



Mr. Tusar Kanti Roy, Research Assistant (left) is taking notes on seminar discussion



Mr. Masum Billah, Research Assistant is in the left corner of the seminar desk.





Mr. Anwar Hossain (Anu), local newsman of Quarterly *Methobarta*, Kuakata is giving his speech



Participants of the seminar.

### **Recommendations for sustenance of the fishermen community of Kuakata**

- Ø More land can be provided to the fishermen community so that they can use the land for homestead gardening and for planting timber and fruit trees.
- Ø Steps can be taken to form a youth club in the village to carry out social development and welfare program in the village.
- Ø Steps can be taken to bring the villages under rural electrification services.
- Ø Loans can be provided to the fishermen during the month of February, March and April when the community get little or inadequate amount of fish and fry. They require a large amount of money during this period to buy necessary items (nets, boats, anchors, floats etc.) for fishing and fry collection (for the fishing season), which start from the next month. During this period, they get ready for fishing and fry collection for the coming season.
- Ø The women folk can be provided with loan for different income generating activities. If the women can establish sewing business, poultry farms etc. they could spend 5-8 hours per day in these activities even after completing all their household activities. This could raise their income, resolving their unemployment problem.
- Ø Health care centers should be provided at Kuakata so that the fishermen community and the tourists can avail the services.
- Ø Separate markets and depots can be developed for marketing of fish and fry at Kuakata. The fishermen will then have the scope for bargaining while selling the fish and fry to avail a reasonable market price.
- Ø The fishermen community should be provided with government soft loans to get rid of the extortion by *dadandars* (moneylenders). Steps to be taken to develop linkages with the NGO's, donors and CBOs for financial supports towards their sustenance through livelihood enhancing and income generating activities.
- Ø Facilities for fry storage (for a few days) to be provided in Kuakata so that the fishermen could store the fry (for sale at the time of higher market price). It is found that fishermen must have to sell all the collected fry to the hawkers at a lower price finding no other alternative for storage.
- Ø Care and supervisions to be taken to develop sustainable fisheries activities (fish processing, drying, handling etc.) by the government and NGO's.
- Ø There can be developed a marine fisheries laboratory cum mini zoo at the beach for tourists. Revenue can be earned from this project.
- Ø Saline tolerant trees can be planted at the near fronts of the sea and then less saline tolerant trees towards the land. Less saline tolerant trees are namely Mehagani, Raintree, Sisoo, Chambal, Coconut, Betel nut, Mango, Jackfruit etc.
- Ø The tourists are interested to see the life of the fisherman community. Steps to be taken for improving the environment adjacent to fishermen villages in a hygienic manner so that the tourists feel better while visiting them.

### **Problems of Tourism Development at Kuakata**

A number of problems for tourism development at *Kuakata* emerged from the seminar. These problems are pointed below:

#### **Poor Transportation System**

Transportation is the main problem for tourism development at *Kuakata*. The condition of the *Kuakata*-Kalapara-Patuakhali highway is very bad. Though the construction and development works of this road have been going on in a slow pace, the road is not convenient for movement. The tourists and visitors visiting *Kuakata* are often at the risk of their lives. The distance between Kalapara and *Kuakata* is only 22 Km and there are 3 ferries within this short distance. The ferries are also in a bad condition. The landing areas (*ghats*) are not high enough, and most of the landing areas go under water during high tide. The road is quite narrow. The bricks of the road are found to be loose, while there are large holes in the road. Due to the poor condition of transportation system, no one wishes to visit *Kuakata* again. Not only this, a person having the bad experience of visiting *Kuakata*, often discourages his relatives, friends and familiar persons (based on his own experience) not to visit *Kuakata*. Establishment of new ferries and pontoons along with gangways over the rivers is therefore very urgent.

#### **Inadequate Exposure of Kuakata**

There are many attractions such as *Gangamotir Forest*, *Pathrara Forest*, Misripara Buddhist Statue, Rakhain Palli (Village), Shutki Palli (Village) etc. in the surrounding areas of *Kuakata*. These attractions have not yet been exposed and developed for tourism. For this reason, most of the tourists leave *Kuakata* just after enjoying the sunrise and sunset. According to the local people, there are options to create more attraction points for enjoyments at *Kuakata*. Local Rakhain cultural functions can be made attractive to the tourists. Steps to be taken in this regard.



### **Inadequate Recreation Facilities**

There is lack of recreational facilities such as seating and gossiping points, chairs and benches with electric lights, picnic spots, provisions for regular cultural functions etc. at *Kuakata*. Recreation facilities should be provided by placing more chairs and benches with electric lights at different places of the coconut garden (owned by the Farms and Farms Co. Ltd.) Cultural festivals may be arranged by the local artists at the hall room of Rakhain Cultural Academy during evening.

### **Inadequate of Security Measures**

Security measure is not found to be satisfactory at *Kuakata*. A few unexpected events like disturbance by drug addicted young boys are found now and then. It should be stopped taking appropriate measures. Night guards of the police force and concerned defense forces to be increased to ensure more security at *Kuakata*, especially near the beach area. More security should be ensured for the devotees who come during the *Rash Purnima* (Rash Festivale).

### **Lack of Control of Hotel Rent and Food Price**

There is no control over the price of foods, beverage, souvenirs etc. found in the restaurants and souvenir shops. The owners of the restaurants and souvenir shops sell their products at different (much higher) prices to maximize their profits. The tourists and visitors are sometimes unnecessarily harassed by such uncontrolled price fluctuation. The local people, tourists and visitors, all are being indirectly affected by this practice. The tourists feel insecure and discomforted to buy the commodities and avail the services. The goodwill of *Kuakata* is at stake. The tourists generally do not wish to buy large amount of commodities and souvenirs from *Kuakata*. It can have a negative impact on tourism development.



### **Other Problems**

Tourist area of *Kuakata* has not yet been delineated and declared. The local people and outside investors are building different structures in an unplanned way within the areas to be acquired and declared later as tourism or *Parjatan* area. The owners of these structures may face difficulties later to relocate or dismantle them in a very short notice. The investors will be badly affected due to this problem.

There is no hygienic and modern fish processing industry in and around *Kuakata*.

Land value of *Kuakata* is increasing day by day with the increase of tourism development activities. The outside investors are showing keen interest to invest here in the tourism activities. They are investing to develop hotels, motels, restaurants, souvenir shops, departmental stores, markets, etc. at *Kuakata*. Under this circumstances, a number of greedy

brokers/middlemen are involved in irregularities in selling land to the outsiders. The outside investors are found to fall in their trap of faulty transactions while buying lands. Incompatibility in price, fraudulence and irregularities in deeds etc. are common, which the outside investors have to face. In most cases, the outsiders can not buy lands at real market price.

At times, there existed terrorism and violence at *Kuakata*. The tourists, mainly the female ones, feel insecured at *Kuakata* due to such incidents.

In *Kuakata* there is no administrative set up like Upazila Headquarters. The people of *Kuakata* have to go Kalapara for administrative works traveling a long distance. *Kuakata* does not remain busy for all the months of the year due to absence of such administrative facility. *Kuakata* remains busy only during the tourist season. It hinders the development of *Kuakata* along with its people.

The fishermen fix anchors on the beach, mainly in areas where tourists walk and move frequently. Tourists feel disturbed and sometimes accidents occur with these anchors.

There are fish drying spots within the beach areas where tourists are found to walk along (the beach) while enjoying the sunrise, sunset and the sea. The bad smell, which comes from fish drying, irritates the tourists.

A few local people are sometimes found to excavate the beach and take away sands for construction activities. It reduces the beauty of the beach and enhances beach erosion.

There is no separate fish market at *Kuakata* for smooth operation of fishery business activities. The fishermen communities are acutely facing this problem.

There is a sub station for telephone at *Kuakata*. It is frequently found to be out of order. Mobile telephone, e-mail and internet facilities have not yet reached *Kuakata*. So the tourists are often unable to communicate with their families, relatives and offices (about their arrival and departure) while staying at *Kuakata*.

Load shedding of electricity for about 3-6 hours per day is a common phenomenon at *Kuakata*. It brings inconvenience to the tourists and others.

There exists a great variation in the rate of accommodation costs of the *Zilla Parishad Dakbangalow* and rest houses of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for the government and non-government employees. The rate is much higher for the non-government employees. It discourages the non-government employees to tour *Kuakata*.

The buses, trucks, pickups, vans, micro buses, private cars and vans used for transportation (of tourists, passengers and goods) are found to stand on the embankment and highways. It creates difficulties for movement of tourists and local people. It is also odd looking. The places where the vehicles are kept become dirty, muddy and unhygienic.

There is no eco-park (with various facilities) at *Kuakata* along the beach towards the east and west direction. The tourists fail to enjoy such recreation facility while walking along the beach.

There is no watchtower in the forest areas adjacent to *Kuakata*. The tourists can not enjoy the natural scenery of the vast sea and green vegetation of the forest along with human habitations.

There are 3-4 seating benches at the central point of the beach established by a private vendor. It does not fulfill the requirement of a large number of tourists during the peak tourism season. No seating arrangement has been provided here by the government and Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (at certain intervals), so that the tourists can take rest while walking along the beach.

There is inadequate picnic spots with all facilities relevant (such as furnace, firewood, water supply, guide and helpers) at *Kuakata*. There are few spots in the coconut and teak garden adjacent to *Kuakata*, but these are not well facilitated and carefully preserved.

There is lack of modern steamer and speed boat service at *Kuakata* for the tourists to make journey in the sea and enjoy the attractive forest named *Gangamotir Forest* and *Fatrar Forest* located at the east-west direction from the main beach of *Kuakata*.

There is no floating pontoon in the sea near *Kuakata* to develop and promote water transportation between *Kuakata* and different of the country.

### **Prospects/potentials of Tourism Development at Kuakata**

There are numerous potentials/prospects at *Kuakata* to develop this site as a tourist spot. The present and future prospects mention by the participants of the seminar are listed below:

#### **Present potentials**

The rare scene of sunrise and sunset

The largest Buddhist Statue in the sub-continent

Attractive and clam and quiet beach

Natural greenery along the beach  
Pine Forest  
*Gangamotir Forest*  
*Fatrar Forest*  
*Rash Mela/Rash Purnima(Annual Festival for the pilgrims)*  
Rakhain Palli/Village  
Shutki Palli/Village  
Rakhain Culture  
Fishermen communities  
Fishing activities

### **Future potentials**

Developing an EPZ  
Burmese handicrafts center  
Eco-park  
Watchtower

### **Recommendations for Tourism Development at Kuakata as emerged from the Seminar**

- Ø Tourist area of *Kuakata* to be delineated and declared. The local people and outside investors are building different structures in an unplanned way within the areas to be acquired and declared as tourism or *Parjatan* area. The area to be delineated (and land uses to be permitted within the areas) should be made public so that the investors and developers can work in a planned way.
- Ø A number of fish processing industries can be set up in and around *Kuakata*. Already *Kuakata* has been unofficially declared as an Export Processing Zone (EPZ). The fishermen community will be benefited if there exists modern fish processing facilities at *Kuakata*. The transportation, communication and physical infrastructure to be developed to support EPZ activities will also be complementary to tourism development at *Kuakata*.
- Ø The land value of *Kuakata* is increasing day by day with the increase of tourism development activities at *Kuakata*. The outside investors are showing keen interest to invest here in tourism development activities. They are planning to invest for developing hotels, motels, restaurants, hospitals, clinics, souvenir shops, departmental stores, markets, etc. at *Kuakata*. Under this circumstance, a number of greedy brokers are involved in irregularities of selling land to the outsiders. The outside investors are found to fall in a faulty position while buying lands. Incompatibility in price, fraudulence and irregularities in deeds etc. are the problems, which the outside investors have to face. Steps to be taken by local administration to stop such irregularities so that they can buy lands at real market price without facing any problem.
- Ø Steps to be taken against the terrorists and their violence at *Kuakata*. The tourists, mainly the female ones feel insecure at *Kuakata* due to this.
- Ø *Kuakata* should be declared as an Upazila Headquarters and steps to be taken to foster the development of such administrative setting. The local people will get all the administrative facilities from the New Upazila Headquarters at *Kuakata*. Time and money of the poor people would thus be saved. Subsequently, *Kuakata* would be busy for all the year round for administrative, tourism and fisheries related activities.
- Ø Fixing anchors on the beach, mainly in the central beach areas where tourists stay and move frequently should be prohibited. The tourists will not feel disturbed and occurrence of accidents (with the anchors) will then be stopped.
- Ø The fish drying spots are to be prohibited from the central beach areas where tourists are found to walk along the beach while enjoying the sunrise, sunset, waves and the sea.
- Ø A few local people are sometimes found to excavate the beach and take away sands for construction activities. It reduces the beauty of the beach and enhances beach erosion. Steps should be taken to stop this practice to preserve the beach and restore the beauty of the beach.
- Ø A separate fish market can be established at *Kuakata* for smooth operation of fishery business activities. The fishermen community will benefit from such initiative.
- Ø A *Parjatan Village* can be established near the proposed EPZ areas.
- Ø Burmese handicrafts (i.e. *Lungi*, Wrapper, shirts, cloths etc.) made by handlooms should be produced in large volumes for sale at the newly constructed *Rakhain* market at *Kuakata*.
- Ø More security to be ensured for the devotees visiting *Kuakata* during the *Rash Purnima (Annual festival)*.
- Ø More local people should be involved with the *Radhakrishna Sebasram* at *Kuakata* for its development.

- Ø The local Rakhain cultural affairs and functions can be made more attractive to the tourists. Steps to be taken in this regard. The local artists at the hall room may arrange cultural festivals during evening.
- Ø Recreation facilities to be provided by placing more chairs and benches with electric lights at different places of the coconut garden owned by the Farms and Farms Co. Ltd.
- Ø Unexpected events like disturbance by drug addicted young boys should be stopped by taking appropriate security measures. Number of night guard of the police and concerned defense forces to be increased to ensure more security at *Kuakata*, especially near the beach area.
- Ø Committees to be formed by the local people, civil society, hotel-restaurant owners and concerned management persons to bring control over the market price of the daily commodities and services. The local people, tourists and visitors, all will mutually benefit from such coordinated efforts. The tourists would feel secured and comfortable to buy the commodities at market prices. Control over the market price will attract more tourists to visit *Kuakata*, stay for a few days and to buy more commodities and souvenirs. It would have positive effects on tourism development.
- Ø No unplanned construction and development activities to be permitted in the areas declared and delineated for tourism development.
- Ø There is a sub station for telephone at *Kuakata*. It is frequently found to be out of order. Mobile telephone, e-mail and internet facilities etc. have not yet reached *Kuakata*. So the tourists are often unable to communicate easily with their families, relatives and offices. A full-fledged telephone and telegraph station (along with provision of modern communication facilities like mobile telephone, e-mail, internet etc.) to be established at *Kuakata*.
- Ø An electricity or power transmission station to be established at *Kuakata* to minimize the severe electricity load shedding, which prevails at *Kuakata*. A mini power station can be established at *Kuakata* to produce electricity to supply and support *Kuakata*.
- Ø There exists a great variation in the rate of accommodation of the *Zilla Parishad Dakbangalow* and the rest houses of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for the government and non-government employees. The rate is much higher for non-government employees. It discourages the non-government employees to visit *Kuakata* due to higher rate of accommodation fees. Steps to be taken to make the rate equal both for the government and non-government employees. It will encourage the non-government employees to tour *Kuakata*. It would have a positive impact towards promotion of tourism at *Kuakata*.
- Ø Buses, trucks, pickup vans, micro buses, private cars and rickshaw vans (used for transportation of tourists, passengers and goods) are found to stand on the embankment and highways. It creates difficulties for the movement of tourists and local people. It also looks odd. The places where the vehicles are kept aside become dirty, muddy and unhygienic. To solve these problems, a separate well-furnished bus stand would be established at *Kuakata*.
- Ø A number of eco-parks with different facilities to be established at different points along the beach (towards both the east and west direction) of *Kuakata*. The tourists would visit the parks while walking along the beach. The parks would attract the tourists.
- Ø A number of watchtowers can be established in the forest areas adjacent to *Kuakata*. The tourists would see the natural scenery of the vast sea and green vegetation of the forest along with human habitats.
- Ø A number of seating benches to be established along the beach at certain intervals, so that tourists can take rest while long distance walking along the beach.
- Ø More picnic spots to be created with all facilities (such as furnace, firewood, water supply, guide and helpers) in the coconut and teak garden adjacent to *Kuakata*.
- Ø Modern steamer and speed boat service to be established at *Kuakata* for the tourists to make journey in the sea and enjoy the attractive forest (named *Gangamotir Forest* and *Fatrar Forest*) located at the east-west direction from the main beach of *Kuakata*.
- Ø Floating pontoons can be established in the sea near *Kuakata* to develop and maintain water transportation facility between *Kuakata* and different areas of the country.
- Ø A few three-star hotels to be developed with all sorts of tourism facilities viz. lodging, food, bar, recreation and entertainment etc.
- Ø Steps to be taken to control the massive erosion and save *Kuakata* sea-beach for both the tourism and fisheries development.



- Ø National commercial banks to be established in Kuakata for financial support and monetary transactions of the businessmen, traders, tourism developers, tourists and local people.

### **Conclusion of the Seminar**

*Kuakata* is a potential tourist site for both the domestic and foreign tourists. Government can earn a lot of revenue from tourism at *Kuakata*. The socio-economic development of the local community (fishermen, farmers and others) will be improved if the area is developed fully for tourism. The government, donors and private agencies should take steps for tourism development at *Kuakata*.

### **Participants**

G. M. Nazrul Islam (Head Master, 60 No. Latachapli Govt. Primary School, Kuakata), Md. Nurul Huda (UP Member, Latachapli Union), Abdul Khaleque (*Dafader* Latachapli Union Parishad), Anwar Hossain Anu (News Man), Nasir Uddin Biplob (News Man), S. M. Shajan Seraj (School Teacher), Md. Shahjahan Sikder (School Teacher), Md. Mashiur Rahman (NGO Official, C. E. R. P., P. M. U. S., Kuakata), Md. Ziaul Ahsan (NGO Official, CODEC, Kuakata), Md. Faruk (Hotel Manager), Shyamal Karmaker (Hotel Manager), Mang San (Rakhain Representative), Abdul Kadir (Local man), Ali Ahmad, Md. Younus Khalipah, Md. Ohab Akhand, Md. Sahidul Islam, Md. Mahbub Alam, Md. Latif Khan, Md. Abu Zafar and others (Fishermen and fishery businessmen).

