

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR AN ISLAND ON THE BAY OF BENGAL COAST ENVIRONMENT IMPACT OF ONE MILLION PILGRIMS**

### **CHANDMONI BASAK**

Associate Planner, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority, Unnayan Bhavan, Salt Lake Township, Kolkata 700 091, India.

E-Mail: cmbasak@hotmail.com

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The river Ganges in India rises from the Himalayan glacier Gongotri and flows through eastern India and partly through Bangladesh. She assumes the name of river Hoogly in the downstream up to Sagar Island where the river opens into the Bay of Bengal. The banks of entire river Ganges are densely populated dotted with industries, towns and fertile agricultural land in between. The lower delta receives sediments from upstream. Sagar island dates back to 3000 BC. There are many historical references. It has faced many natural disasters with loss of life. The lower coastal deltaic region is known as the Sunderbans biosphere with mangrove forests, flora and fauna with unique biodiversity. On the 14<sup>th</sup> January each year pilgrims from all over India come, quarter million on the average sometimes up to one million for bathing in the Bay of Bengal.

The paper explains the Development Plan for Sagar Island and the author was a member of the planning team.

### **2. DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Sagar island (38km x 8 km) has a floating population. The pilgrims come through transit points and planning of these areas is also important. Development plan provides a comprehensive land-use plan, identify emerging urban centres, road system, agricultural and fishing area, tourism development area, proposal for a helipad, plantations, deer park etc. and a detail development plan for the annual fair ground near Kapil Muni Temple with pilgrims' permanent facilities. Part of this plan has been implemented. Solar energy and wind power have been introduced. Separately Sagar Marine park has been proposed.

There are environmental measures – providing embankment, prevention of soil erosion, conservation of historic areas, plantations and improvement of infrastructure, control of effluent and waste water disposal, sanitation etc.

Upgradation of infrastructure, economic activities and provision of social facilities are part of plan.

Coastal areas with unique ecosystem are critical areas and the Govt. of India has defined the coastal regulation zone up to 500 m from high tide line and certain restrictions are imposed.