

## **A HARBOUR TOWN IN CROSS ROAD, DIAMOND HARBOUR IN CHANGE**

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**Abstract**

*Diamond Harbour is the town of the southern suburbs of Kolkata, on the bank of the river Hooghly, quite near where the river is not far away from the river mouth. This town is a popular weekend tourist spot located in south 24 parganas. Earlier known as Hajipur, this charming place was named Diamond Harbour by the British. The Diamond Harbour settlement is an ancient settlement of South 24 parganas, most important of its surroundings, comparatively developed and the growth point of South 24 parganas. Diamond Harbour I and Diamond Harbour II are the administrative division in Diamond Harbour subdivision of South 24 parganas of West Bengal. Diamond Harbour police station serves this block. The accessibility and transport facility helps to join the district with Kolkata. The riverside scenario helps to develop this region in terms of growth of fishing industry, port development and also flourishing tourism industry.*

**Keywords:** *accessibility, development, fishing, growth point, tourism,*



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**INTRODUCTION :** Diamond harbor's location is in close proximity to the confluence of river Hooghly in Bay of Bengal in one land and it is not far away from the city like Kolkata (the then Calcutta) on the other. British gave this name to this place with above. During their rule in India the merchant ships were anchored here and had contributed heavily in the maritime trade and commerce. In older days this place was well connected with Kolkata through waterway. Road connection was also established. Diamond harbor acted like gateway to Kolkata for the overseas merchants. This factor led to the growth of Diamond harbor to a large extent in yester years. After independence there had been sea charge in the economic activities of this town. Owing to siltation in the river Hooghly big ships are not entering into the river and no more taking shelter in this harbor. As a result trade and commerce got a jolt initially. But later on a paradigm change has taken place over here. Now the economic activities have taken different root. Here in this paper an attempt has been made to trace this charge over.

**LOCATION:** Diamond Harbor is the town in the southern suburbs of Kolkata, on the bank of the river Hooghly, quite near where the river is not far away from the river mouth. This town is a popular weekend tourist spot located in south 24 parganas. Earlier known as

Hajipur, this charming place was named Diamond Harbour by the British. The Diamond Harbour settlement is an ancient settlement of South 24 parganas, most important of its surroundings, comparatively developed and the growth point of South 24 parganas.

This small town with a picturesque setting is the gateway to the south western part of the district. The selected study area bounded by  $22^{\circ}11'30''$  North and  $88^{\circ}11'5''$  East. The boundary of this most important settlement area of South 24 parganas are as follows: North Ramgobindapur mouza, Joydebpur mouza and Bahadurpur mouza, East Durganagar mouza, Krishnarampur mouza, West Chakdeulpota & Harinarayanpur mouza.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To understand the present condition of Diamond Harbour.
- To know the growth of harbor area from the past to present state of development.
- To point out the major influential zone of Diamond harbor subdivision and also point out the impact of the area.
- To bring out the problems of this region.
- Find out the solutions to overcome the problems

**METHODOLOGY:** The methodology of the whole study has been divided into three steps.

- Pre field works: This stage involves collection of different levels of secondary data like census data, ward map, block map, aerial photo, satellite image etc, from different government organizations which help to make research work.
- Field work: This step involves visiting the study area for collection primary data.
- Post field work: This is most important task for preparation of the research work by assembling the report obtained from various sources.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE SETTING:**

Diamond Harbour I (community development block) is an administrative division in Diamond Harbour subdivision of South 24 Parganas district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Diamond Harbour police station serves this block. Headquarters of this block is at Diamond Harbour, Gram Panchayet of Diamond Harbour I block/ Panchayet Samiti are: Basuldanga, Bol Sidhi Kalinagar, Dearak, Harindanga, Kanpur Dhanberia, Mashat, Netra and Purulia.

Diamond Harbour II (community development block) is an administrative division in Diamond Harbour sub division of South 24 Parganas district in the Indian state of West

Bengal. Diamond Harbour police station serves this block. Headquarters of this block is at Sarisha. Gram Panchayet of Diamond Harbour II blocks/ Panchayet samiti are: Bhadura Haridas, Kalatalahat, Kamarpole, Khordo, Mathur, Noorpur, Patra and Sarisha.

### **STAGE WISE GROWTH OF THE SETTLEMENT:**

PHASE I- Earlier Diamond Harbour known as Hajipur and used to be a strong hold of Portuguese pirates. The Portuguese Pirates who built this fort during the 1600s when they conquered the Diamond Harbour and made it their base for their network of conquered countries. The Portuguese utilize this Fort to stay at as well as a warehouse for all their trade-commodities and ammunition, and for their soldiers. The Fort once had 7 underground rooms and 5 canons of which little remains to be seen today. The total area of fort was 20 acre and 60 bighas, but now the fort are in a state of collapse, they came as traders, were allowed to settle on build forts at many places on the banks of the Ganges as it was the main route via Bay of Bengal. This fort was also one of them, built for the Traders and as Warehouse to store merchandise before loading on the ships for Europe. They used to come here for Silk, Spices, Muslins and of course gold. In this way Diamond Harbour became good trade centre.

PHASE II- First it was the Mughal, and then came Portuguese pirates who anchored at Hazipur for the longest time in history and even left behind their buildings and culture. Then the British East India company who leveraged the most from this Harbour town in both trade and in establishing a political stronghold and even renamed it as the Diamond Harbour. In 1947 Diamond Harbour was handed back to its rightful owners- the Indian Government. The name Diamond Harbour was given by the British Power, as it used to be one of the major ports during British rule.

PHASE III -Now it is popular picnic spot for kolkata which is 51 km distance from kolkata. People often set out for a weekend outgoing to Diamond Harbour. The panoramic view attracts the population, especially of West Bengal which helps to growth of tourism industry in Diamond Harbour. Today this place is a well known tourist spot and various hotels, lodges are established in and around this area. Purnolaxmi, Sagarika are examples of these renowned hotels, which are also used for film industry's shooting purpose. The hotel business is increased after 1980. With the passage of time due to siltation Hooghly river lost its navigational scope. Now it becomes a very good tourist spot. Fishing is also another important activity.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

A fundamental feature of Diamond Harbour Town is high population Density. There has been a great concentration of population over the centuries. Historical and socio economic factor have determined the present high density of population. Greater population pressure creates more pressure on the infrastructure as well as provision of health, education, and services. The population growth is consequently increased, where the total population is of 2001 and 2011 are 37234 and 41798 respectively. Diamond harbor is currently the most populated densely populated area. As of 2011 census, Diamond harbor had a population of 21,050 males that constitute 50% of the population and The total no. of female is 20752. Diamond Harbour has an average rate of 78%, higher than the national average of 74.04%. In this town slum population is 25800 and 18980 population belong to B.P.L category.

- Mean centre of population of 2001 and 2011 are located in ward no. 12, indicates a slight shift, towards north eastern part, which is indicating high population growth towards the same direction. The concentration of population of the district can be grouped into three zones. 70% population concentrated of the ward no. 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16.
- Total 39 recognized slums are located in Diamond Harbour municipal area. These slums suffer from various infrastructural problems, service deficiencies in the nature of open deviation system, inadequate quantity of drinking water, insufficient solid waste management. 42% slum families belong to SC and other backward caste.

**MIGRATION** Though the region mainly inhabited by local population and migrant population is much lesser. The % of permanent residents is highest in ward no. 12. Maximum peoples are local. There is Strong probability to further migration. The various causes of out migration are job opportunity, education facility & better life style.

**EDUCATION:** Literacy level is one of the major components of human development. The variation of educational infrastructure has been observed over a region. The growth of literacy rate is increasing over a time. Many of school, college, vocational centre, computer centre and others are located in this area.

According to primary survey only 26.29% population are graduate, 6% are post graduate. High educated population is located in ward no. 9.

**ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTIC:** There is shifting in economic activities from trading to agriculture. It happens due to changing condition of Hooghly river as it lost navigational scope.

Mainly rice is cultivated here. The areas which are adjacent to Diamond Harbour canal practice 2 times cultivation. Besides in other areas only one time is cultivated. About 3567 acre area is under agriculture.

No large industry is flourished here. In ward no.1 a brick field is developed near the river Hughli. It is the weak sector of Diamond harbour. Commercial land is mainly found in ward no. 2, 6, 9, and 10.

Trade & commerce are based on agriculture & fishing. Talpatali derived from palm is famous in Diamond Harbour. It exports to other part of West Bengal& even other states. It has large fish market. Here 30 arats are present.

As a picnic ground and its scenic beauty attract many people. Many people come here, that is why hotel business is flourished. Govt. hotel, Sagarika was developed in 1964. It is the place near the confluence of the Ganga River and the Bay Of Bengal Sea and sight is simply wonderful. Being near the metropolitan city, Kolkata, people often set out to Diamond Harbour. There also stands the remnant of an Old Portuguese fort, which enhances the beauty of the place.

**ACCESSIBILITY OF DIAMOND HARBOUR:** Transport and communication are the essential means for adjusting space by reducing economic distance. Diamond Harbour is a very well known tourists centre and nodal point. Diamond Harbour is connected with places like Kolkata, Bishnupur, Baruipur, Canning, Jaynagar, Kulpi, Kakdeep and Namkhana.

Diamond Harbour is a high accessible zones and surroundings Falta, Magraha I & II, Mathurapur I & II, Lakdweep, Namkhana is moderately accessible zone. There are 60 local buses and 85 long distance buses. Bus, cycle and rickshaw, van availed by local peoples and maximum tourists peoples avail private car to come to diamond Harbour. The peak hour is 8a.m to 12:00 a.m. Most of the commuters travel to and from Diamond Harbour, and lean hour is 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

The main transport problems is it is a accident prone area, inadequacy public transport, parking difficulties, problems of proper traffic signal. The transport facilities of this region

are not quite satisfactory. The main reason behind it is government unawareness regarding development of roads and transport servicing.

### **PROBLEMS**

- More than 23% of population of Diamond Harbour Municipality are economically weak and resides in slum.
- One of the main problems of local economic activities in Diamond Harbour Municipality is absence of large and medium scale industries. Small scale industries are also pathetic in condition.
- At present there is total absence of vocational training, local handicraft training.
- There is lack of conservation of historical places.
- Fishing industry is not properly developed.
- The shipping activity is totally lost.
- Huge amount of siltation in the Hugli River is another problem which is another main cause of undevelopment of trade through river routes.
- Traffic jam is another serious problem.
- Civic amenities are lacking.

**PROSPECTS** The area being in the proximity of the Bay of Bengal, there is scope for development of ports and shipping activity. It has container – handling jetty. Kolkata Port Trust is considering construction of cargo handling jetties. The riverside scenario develops this region in terms of growth of fishing industry and also flourishing tourism industry.

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