The World Ocean Day Beach Cleanup

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IT has always been said that the ocean is the symbol of wealth, mystery and knowledge. Still there are so many things about the ocean that are unknown – hidden inside its own world. Somehow the ocean has always been related to the beginning of the existence of life. The great books have related to the ocean– the Bible and the Quran have spoken about it. According to the Bible, after creating day and night, God said let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and the gathered waters was called 'ocean', then He teemed the water with living creatures. In the Quran it says – then He created water and filled them with living creatures and then He divided that water into river and ocean. The evolutionists also support that the ocean is the beginning of all moving life form. The first life sustaining place was nowhere but the ocean itself.

The World Ocean Day was officially declared by the United Nations as June 8th and is being celebrated for the first time this year, though the concept was proposed in 1992 by Canada at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Environment Club of Independent University in partnership with Cleanup Bangladesh, the organiser of World Ocean Day Beach Cleanup in Bangladesh went to Cox's Bazaar for this event. As our country holds the longest beach in the world, it becomes our responsibility to think about our beach and act according to its needs. Our discipline, Environmental Science and Management suggests that these kinds of needs are best met by a participatory approach. Though participatory approach is more effective than any other environmental management options, the thorough implementation of a complete participatory approach is very difficult to put into practice. It becomes even tougher for countries like ours where the literacy rate is very low and the poverty is high. It is indeed an undeniable fact that someone who has a problem with managing their food will not be interested in any kind of approach that takes them away from income generating activities. We tried our best to implement a participatory approach in this beach cleanup.

The first part of this beach clean up was to include the young generation, so that the awareness or consciousness can be created in the class of people who are actually the future. Striking the iron when it is red is a must because then the iron can be given a particular shape. As they are young, it was easier to make them understand why we need to keep our beach clean and how we can keep it cleaner. If we have been able to give them the message easily and clearly, then it will have its effect in the future. There were two hundred school kids who voluntarily helped us with the clean up. Safety measures like gloves and face masks were provided by SAFE – safety assistance for emergencies. The kids were very enthusiastic, helpful and most importantly all of them were very smart and followed the instructions very well. Everyone was unbelievably swift with their work and also took little more than half an hour to clean up the Laboni Point beach. The Laboni Point beach is that part of Cox's Bazaar beach where most of the tourists and locals visit. As a result, most of the littering is being done there. The kids gathered around 40-45 kilograms of waste in that short period of time. They were provided with refreshment after their work was done.

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