

Bangladesh's Mineral Sector: Potential, Challenges, and Future Prospects

Md Hasanur Rahman Tanzir – Bangladesh is endowed with abundant mineral resources, but their full potential has yet to be realized. Coal, natural gas, limestone, slate, and ceramic raw materials are some of the key minerals that are vital for the country's industrial growth and economic development. However, due to limited exploration and technology, the nation has not been able to fully harness these resources.

The major coal fields are located in Sylhet and Nilphamari. The government has been focusing on coal-based power generation projects. Natural gas reserves are concentrated in Sylhet, Sunamganj, and Chittagong. Limestone and slate, essential for the construction sector, are found in Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, and Chittagong. In addition, local industries rely on fire clay, ceramic materials, and brick-making clay.

Experts emphasize that mineral exploration is crucial for Bangladesh's economic development. Proper exploration helps identify potential mineral sites, plan environmentally responsible mining operations, attract both domestic and foreign investment, and ensure a reliable supply of raw materials for industrial growth.

However, the sector faces several challenges. Lack of advanced technology, insufficient regulatory frameworks, unplanned mining operations, and environmental impacts pose significant obstacles. Mining expansion has sometimes led to deforestation, water contamination, and negative effects on local communities.

The government has taken initiatives to address these issues, including establishing the Bangladesh Mineral and Mining

Development Authority (BMDA), formulating policies to attract foreign investment, and strengthening regulatory oversight to consider environmental and social impacts.

Experts believe that with proper policies, modern technology, and careful planning, Bangladesh's mineral sector can contribute significantly to industrial growth, electricity generation, and exports. It can also create employment opportunities and attract international investment.

In conclusion, if managed effectively, the country's mineral resources can become a major driver of Bangladesh's economic growth. It is time to combine planning and technology to transform the mineral sector into a cornerstone of national development.