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## Coastal and Marine Tourism in the Future

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Bangladesh has the world's longest-unbroken sea beach of 580 km of coastline, 200 nm exclusive economic zone and 12 nm terrestrial zones. So far, relatively limited tourism is developed in a couple of spots including Cox's Bazar, Teknaf and St. Martin's Island. In addition, in the western part, Sundarbans-based tourism has been flourished for last few decades. Although a little success has been achieved in coastal tourism, marine tourism has remained largely ignored. Moreover, most of the tourist activities are of mass nature.

While Travel & Tourism sector accounted for 10.4% of global GDP and 9.9% of global employment in 2017, the contributions of this sector in Bangladesh in terms of GDP and employment are 4.3% of GDP and 3.8% of total employment (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2018). Although this scenario is a positive development compared to the past, global scenario suggests that the country is yet to realize its full potential. Particularly, given the large coastal and marine area the country owns, a large scale development of coastal and marine tourism in this country is possible.

This chapter aims at analyzing the status quo and proposing suggestions to be implemented in the ongoing and future development processes. In particular, it discusses the existing facilities and how further improvement can be achieved so that Bangladesh can use its vast coastal area and marine water body in economic development through enhancing ecotourism.

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. Section 2 sheds some light on a couple of tourist spots which are less familiar and relatively immature but potentially can be developed. This section also proposes some development ideas. Barriers to and benefits of developing sustainable coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh are discussed in Sections 3 and 4, respectively. The Free-rider problem in tourism: Bangladesh perspective is discussed in 5. Some policy suggestions are proposed in Section 6. Finally, Section 7 offers concluding remarks.

## **2 DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM**

### **2.1 Expansion of Coastal Tourism (New, Safe and Secure)**

Among the tourist destinations in Bangladesh, many are in coastal and marine environments. Accordingly, they are termed as coastal and marine tourist spots. Some of them are relatively well-established and recognized by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. They are located mainly in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Patuakhali districts. The existing tourist spots in Chittagong District are Patenga sea beach and Parki sea beach. Cox's Bazar District has an unbroken 120 km long sandy sea beach with gentle slope. Many consider it as the longest sea beach in the world ("Cox's Bazar sea beach," n.d.). This district is the home of quite a few tourist spots like Laboni point, Himchori, Inani beach, Sonadia Island, Teknaf Sea beach, St.

Martin Island and Cherdawip. Khulna is one of the southwestern districts in Bangladesh. It is considered as the gateway to the Sundarbans, one of the UNESCO world heritage sites. Bordering the Bay of Bengal, Khulna has two important coastal and marine tourist spots; Katka and Dublar Char. Finally, Patuakhali District, located in the south-central region of the country. Adjacent to the Bay of Bengal, this district has become attractive due to Kuakata sea beach which is locally known as Shagor Konnya (Daughter of Ocean).

Apart from that, there are a good number of beaches that are not as developed as the ones discussed in the previous section. They seem to have huge untapped potentials. Those potentials need to be unfolded in order to attract more tourists from home and abroad. To this end, proper initiatives should be taken.

*Kutubdia*: Kutubdia is a relatively small island under the district of Cox's Bazar. There is a sea beach adjacent to Boroghob bazar which seems to be as wonderful as Cox's Bazar sea beach. But because of the lack of supporting facilities and necessary publicity, many even do not know the existence of such a lovely place.

*Kattoli*: Kattoli beach, located at South Kattoli beside Zohur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chittagong city, is one of the most attractive beaches that have grossly failed to draw tourists' attention. This is perhaps because of the fact that this beach has come into existence relatively recently compared to other familiar beaches like those in Cox's Bazar and Kuakata. Thanks to the Forest Department, there is a mangrove forest that beautifies the beach and acts as a protection against tidal wave. That is why local people call it the "Sundarbans of Chittagong" (Ara, 2017).

*Bashbaria*: Fifteen minutes distant from Bashbaria bazar in Shitakundo Upazila of Chittagong, this beach is largely muddy. A Jhauban grove and a newly emerged sandy field are among the main attractions of the beach.



Figure 1 : Guliakhali Sea beach. Source: Google Image



Figure 2 : Sun sets at Kattoli Sea beach (Photo by Nur Mubi Mohammad)

*Guliakhali*: This beach is 5 km west of Shitakundo bazar in Shitakundo Upazila of Chittagong. One amazing attraction of the beach is that is green and grassy. This distinguishes the beach from other traditional sandy beaches. The scope of development of this beach is huge.

*Bashkhali*: It is one of the wonderful beaches that remain largely unexplored. This 35 km long sandy beach belongs to points including Khankhanabad, Kathariya, Gondamara, Kadamrasul, Baharchara and Ratnapura. It is the home of some fascinating species including oysters, corals and embellished snail shells (Islam et al., 2016).

## 2.2 Improvement of the Existing Spots in the Coastal Zones

The tourist spots in coastal and marine zones in Bangladesh have remained utterly unexploited. Many of the tourism and recreational activities that are supposed to be in place in a typical coastal/marine spot are yet to be introduced in those spots. Table 1 lists such potential recreational activities as well as existing ones in important coast/marine-based tourist places in Bangladesh. An activity is listed as existing if at least one spot offers the activity. That means many of the activities listed as existing are potential for one or more spots. Thus it is clearly evident from the table that the area of improvement is huge. Tapping this potential would be instrumental in ensuring sustainable expansion of the tourism industry in this country.

**Table 1 : Potential Marine and Coastal Tourism Activities in Bangladesh**

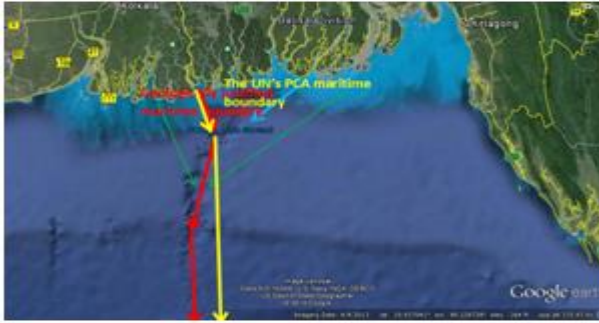
Different coast/marine-based tourist spots in Bangladesh	Coastal tourism activities		Marine tourism activities	
	Existing	Potential	Existing	Potential
	beach volleyball, kite-flying, walking, horse-riding, sand-castle building or sand sculpting, wildlife watching, shell-fish gathering, beach-combing, sun-bathing (baking), picnic and barbecues	tidal-pool exploration, land-yachting, fishing, skim-boarding, radio-controlled boating, crabbing, hang gliding, parasailing	SCUBA diving, snorkeling, scenic boat cruising, surfing, swimming	yachting, water-skiing, wake-boarding, boat based fishing, wildlife watching, sea kayaking, surf-ski paddling, kite-surfing, board-sailing (windsurfing), dragon-boat paddling, stand-up-paddle boarding

Source: Authors' own observations

## 2.3 Cruise to Swatch of No Ground from Chittagong and Khulna

Located in the southern side of Dublar Char Island in the Bay of Bengal, the Swatch of No Ground (SoNG) is a trough-shaped submarine canyon spanning about 1738 square kilometers area with an average depth of 900 meters. On October 27, 2014 a part of it was announced as the first marine protected area (MPA) of Bangladesh by the government ("World leaders can," 2016). It is reported to be a safe breeding and spawning ground for such endangered species as dolphins, whales, sharks, turtles, and a myriad of other marine wildlife ("World leaders can," 2016, Khan, 2017). As far as tourism is concerned, the SoNG is enormously valuable. However, the opportunity to use it as a tourist spot has long been unrealized. One important way to generate values from this mysterious place may be to initiate cruises to it from Chittagong and Khulna. As a marine wildlife tourist spot, SoNG will be an exciting place to the tourists for observation of wildlife. Whales and Dolphins, which are commonly appeared wildlife in SoNG, have gradually become ones among the most attractive touristic amenities. As Gibson et. al., 2007 reveals, for watching Whales and Dolphins, New Zealanders and

international visitors made more than 425,000 visits in 2004. This is an outcome of the growth of number of visits at the annual rate of 11% since 1998.



**Figure 3 : Swatch of No Ground. Source: newsg24.com**



**Figure 4 : Dolphine Swimming in Swatch of No Ground. Source: bdnews24.com**

## 2.4 Cruise on Seaside Tour

A seaside route from St. Martin to Chittagong via Teknaf and Cox's Bazar (Blue colored in Figure 33) and another route from Chittagong to the Sundarbans (Khulna) and Kuakata (Potuakhali) can be envisaged. Cruising on these potential routes would likely to generate a substantial commercial value as well as a significant amenity value. Tourists would be able to explore and enjoy the natural beauty offered by coastal landscapes. It is important to mention that currently traveling from Chittagong to Khulna through land route (marked by purple color in Figure 5) requires travelling via Dhaka entailing a 12.30-hour journey of 445 km distance. If the proposed marine route is introduced (Red marked in Figure 5), traveling from Chittagong to Khulna would significantly reduce time and cost. Additionally, it would help reduce ever-growing traffic jam on Dhaka-Chittagong highway.



**Figure 5: Seaside Routes**

## 2.5 Exclusive Tourism Zones in the Coastal Areas for Foreigners

With a view to attracting foreign tourists, Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) has taken an initiative to build up an exclusive tourism zone encompassing an area of 1027 acres in Sabrang under Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar. The geography of Sabrang allows development of a wide range of tourism and entertainment. On completion of the zone, the authority would be able to allure many foreign as well as local tourists. BEZA should examine the possibility of setting up such zones in other spots such as St. Martin and Kuakata.

## 2.6 Surfing Zone

Surfing is one of the interesting components of tourism. Although Bangladesh has the world's longest sea beach, surfing activities are available on a very small scale and only in Cox's Bazar.

Our neighboring countries, especially, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are far ahead of us in this respect. Initiatives should be taken to establish surfing zones in different beach areas such as Cox's Bazar, St. Martin, Teknaf, and Kuakata. Government, however, has a plan to establish one in Cox's Bazar. Tapping the potential for surf tourism is likely to positively affect our domestic economy. This is empirically evident. For example, Pettina (2016) examines the influence of surf tourism on coastal Bali and finds that there is a correlation between the influx of surf tourist and the acceleration of development.

## 2.7 Community-Based Ecotourism

As defined by Denman (2001), community-based ecotourism is a form of ecotourism where the local community plays a major role in its development and management, and a substantial portion of the benefits is received by the community. Since the community is proactively involved and the livelihoods of a host of the community's residents hinge on the intactness of the nature and the environment, the residents of the community have incentive to collectively conserve the tourist area. If proper initiatives are taken, Bangladesh can generate huge benefits by developing community-based ecotourism in the coastal regions. Wood (2009) suggests that Teknaf peninsula offers a great potential for community-based ecotourism.

## 2.8 Underwater Tourism

Underwater tourism is an exciting form of tourist attraction. It opens a new frontier in tourism. Providing direct access to aquatic lives and ecosystem in underwater world, it creates immense pleasure for tourists. Underwater tourism has been developed in many countries.



**Figure 6: Underwater Tourism. Source: Mismach.com**



**Figure 7: Underwater Tourism Facility. Source: Business insider**

The benefit of underwater tourism is impressive in terms of monetary value. Pascal & Seidl (2013) estimated the economic benefit of underwater tourism in Vanuatu and Fiji. They showed that around 12000 visitors participated in underwater tourism in Vanuatu in a year contributing benefits for 10 businesses.





**Figure 8: St. Martin Island. Source: solarpowerportal.co.uk**



**Figure 9: Cheradwip. Source: Mapio.net**

Two Bangladeshi coral islands—St. Martin’s main island and Cheradwip—offer ample opportunity for developing underwater facilities. The water that surrounds these two islands is so blue and clear that the living aquatic animals and plants can be watched with bare eyes. One other potentially suitable spot is Kuakata sea beach, which fronts water of comparable quality. Introduction of underwater tourism in these places would potentially attract huge number of tourists from home and abroad. However, while developing the underwater facilities government should consider the carrying capacity of the spots. Carrying capacity sets a limit beyond which development activities are not consistent with ecological and social sustainability (Pascal & Seidl, 2013).

## **2.9 Marine and Coastal Based Sport Tourism**

As a tourist attraction popularity of marine and coastal based sport tourism increases globally (Lagarensen and Walansendow, 2016). Introduction of marine and coastal based sport tourism in Bangladesh could be another exciting event for tourism development. Lagarensen and Walansendow (2016) advocated sport tourism at the Manado waterfront in Indonesia. To promote it as a tourist attraction, they recommended that it be included in the calendar events with proper planning and facilities. In Cox’s Bazar, bodybuilding competition has already become a popular event. In 2017, the 3rd Walton bodybuilding competition started at Laboni sea beach at Cox’s Bazar and about one hundred participants from 35 clubs took part in that competition. Bangladesh Bodybuilding Federation organized this competition with the sponsorship of Walton Bangladesh (“Bodybuilding competition,” 2017). This type of sport induces organizers, participants and sport lovers to make tour for sport purpose during their leisure (Herstein and Jaffe, 2008; cited from Lagarensen and Walansendow, 2016). Being the world’s largest, Cox’s Bazar sea beach offers a great opportunity to introduce more sport events. Such attempt would certainly promote the country’s marine and coastal tourism.



Figure 10: Bodybuilding Competition at Cox's Bazar Sea Beach. Source: AllEvents.in

### **3 BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS IN DEVELOPING COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM IN BANGLADESH**

#### **3.1 Lack of Proper Planning**

Planning is instrumental in the process of any sort of development. Tourism industry is no exception. Although Bangladesh has several entities that were established for the betterment of tourism industry, a proper planning is yet to be designed and implemented for the specific purpose of developing the country's coastal and marine tourism.

#### **3.2 Lack of Sufficient Budgetary Allocation**

Since development of tourism essentially requires provision of some goods which are of public or quasi-public nature, market failure is inevitable. Hence, budgetary allocation is necessary to achieve optimal level of development in tourism sector. Traditionally every year Bangladesh government proposes an allocation for Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry in the national budget. But the size of the allocation appears very scanty. For example, in the recent budget (2017-18) Tk. 687 crore was proposed which is 0.17% of the budget. It is quite impossible to develop a sustainable coastal and marine tourism with this scanty allocation.

#### **3.3 Short-Term Focus**

Developing a sustainable coastal and marine tourism is a long-term phenomenon. Because government has incentive to focus on short-term objectives ignoring long-term ones, such development agendum is left mostly unattended. Short-term focus induces government to give priority to economic achievements over social and environmental concerns creating a strong barrier to sustainable development of tourism (Dudds and Butler, 2009).

### **3.4 Absence of Community Participation**

If the residents of the local community are not made involved in the process of development of the tourist spot, they will be reluctant in playing any role to conserve the nature and the environment. This is a great impediment to the development in question. As mentioned before, community-based ecotourism is an approach to getting around such impediment. Bangladesh is yet to embrace community-based ecotourism. That means the impediment is in place.

### **3.5 Lack of Awareness Among Local Residents**

If local residents are not aware of the issue of sustainability and the environment and the value that their neighborhood generates as a tourist spot, they will neither realize the importance of conserving the neighborhood nor demand government contribution in developing the spot. Thus lack of awareness is one of the major impediments to sustainable development of tourism.

### **3.6 Lack of Coordination Between Agencies**

There must be coordination between different agencies involved in a process in order for the process to succeed. As far as development of coastal and marine tourism is concerned, several government agencies such as Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, Bangladesh Tourism Board and Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation are involved. Some degree of coordination among them must prevail. Besides, local administration, local community, NGOs working for the conservation of environment, potential private investors etc. are relevant entities. These non-government entities also must have coordination among themselves and with the government agencies. However, in countries like Bangladesh, it is the government bureaucracy that inherently stands in the way of necessary coordination.

### **3.7 Lack of Publicity and Marketing Activities**

Bangladesh lags far behind the nations in its peer group in taking proper marketing strategy to promote and publicize even its mature tourist destinations. Some of its tourist spots, such as Kattoli sea beach and Banshkhali sea beach, are not mature. The immaturity of those spots can largely be attributed to the lack of necessary publicity.

## **4 BENEFITS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.1 Contribution to GDP**

Coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh contributes to GDP in many ways. Tourism activities in coastal and marine spots involve direct production of numerous goods (e.g. foods, entertainment equipment, and recreational equipment) and services (e.g. accommodation, transport, retail trade, recreation). Indirect contributions to GDP take place through investment

and government spending in this sub-sector. Additionally, there are induced contributions due to spending of those who are directly or indirectly employed by this sub-sector. While no particular estimation of how much coastal and marine tourism contributes available, World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) regularly publishes global and country-specific economic impact of travel & tourism on a yearly basis. According to WTTC (2018), the total contribution of travel & tourism to GDP in Bangladesh was \$10,567.4mn (4.3% of GDP) in 2017.

#### **4.2 Employment Generation**

Being largely labor-intensive, tourism industries provide jobs for many. WTTC (2018) quotes President & CEO of WTTC as saying “Travel & Tourism, which already supports one in every 10 jobs on the planet, is a dynamic engine of employment opportunity”. Although Bangladesh is not on a par with the world in this respect the contribution of Travel & Tourism in general and coastal and marine tourism in particular to employment generation is not ignorable. Many hotels, restaurants, retailers, and street vendors are serving tourists in the country’s tourist attractions along the seashore, creating extensive employment opportunity. Others employment generators in this sub-sector include travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services, leisure industries etc. WTTC (2018) estimates that in Bangladesh Travel & Tourism created 2,432,000 jobs (3.8% of total employment) in 2017.

#### **4.3 Poverty Alleviation**

Many of the jobs created in tourism sector are accessible to the poor due to low requirement in terms of skill and investment. Many tourism activities particularly in the coastal region of Bangladesh are suited to the people of disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, the incidence of poverty in the coastal region of Bangladesh is significant. According to estimation, this region is the home of 12 million poor (World Bank, 2016). That means there is adequate supply of labor as against demand for labor, which gives rise to a potential for poverty alleviation. There are evidences that this potential is at least partially, if not fully, realized; out of the pool of poor people many find opportunity to work in respective tourism spots. For example, Farzana (2014) reveals that in Kuakata sea beach area 77.12% of the poor are employed in tourism related occupations, whereas this ratio for local people as whole is 74.05%. The study, however, suggests that there is still ample untapped opportunity for poverty reduction.

#### **4.4 Foreign Exchange Earnings**

One of the great benefits of coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh is earning foreign exchange. Thanks to international tourists spending within Bangladesh, the country earns a good amount foreign currency each year. In 2017, it earned \$228.5 M from visitor exports which was 0.6% of total exports (WTTC, 2018). A significant portion of this is due to tourism in the coastal and marine zones. According a newspaper report, Bangladesh earned Tk.3.5mn in foreign currency from a single recent cruise tour in the coastal belt (“Bangladesh enters,” 2017). Similar amount of foreign currency earnings from another upcoming trip was predicted by the same report. This is just an indication of how much crucial role coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh can play in earning foreign currency.

#### **4.5 Socio-Cultural Benefits**

Sustainable tourism brings diverse socio-cultural benefits. It promotes peace by fostering understanding between local residents and tourists. It facilitates the preservation and transmission of cultural and historical traditions. It raises awareness among local people about the socio-economic value of the tourist sites. Above all, it makes them take pride in heritages and realize the importance of conserving those (“Socio-cultural benefits,” n.d.). To the extent that coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh is sustainable, it gives rise to the benefits just mentioned.

#### **4.6 Environmental Benefits**

Multiple environmental benefits may emerge from sustainable tourism. When environmental sites are allocated for tourism keeping them presentable to the tourists in a sustainable manner becomes an important duty of the concerned authorities. Thus the authorities have incentives to take necessary steps in order to adequately protect and preserve the sites. Since sustainable tourism is often community-based, it makes the local people actively participate in the management and thereby stimulates public awareness of the value of environment and nature. So the residents of the local community lend support to the conservation of the tourist site. Moreover, various fees and taxes collected from tourists form a handsome government fund which can be spent for offsetting environmental degradations, if any. Although Bangladesh cannot claim that its coastal and marine tourism is fully sustainable, it seems to be on the way to that goal. Gradually it would be able to reap all of these benefits.

#### **4.7 Protecting Coastal Areas**

Development of sustainable coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh might have double dividend: huge influx of tourists and protection of coastal areas from natural disasters. A proper tourism plan will precipitate enormous development activities including building dams and embankments, and establishing mangrove plantations in the coastal zones. Such activities will create amenity services with facilities and will protect the coastal zones from sea waves, wave surges and cyclones. Because of multiple factors including funnel shape of the Bay and shallowness of the water body, Bangladesh is most likely to be hit by cyclones formed in the Indian Ocean (Shaji et al. 2014). However, properly developed sustainable coastal and marine tourism will reduce the intensity of the damages during the natural disasters in the coastal areas.

### **5 FREE-RIDER PROBLEM IN TOURISM: BANGLADESH SCENARIO**

Free-rider problem is said to exist if economic agents can use resources without making any payment. Many goods and services related to tourism are exposed to such problem due to their non-excludable nature. Ability to free-ride induces people to over-consume. As far as tourism is concerned, such overconsumption leads to numerous negative consequences including environmental degradation and extinction of valuable resources. Since market is inherently unable to solve free-rider problem, appropriate government intervention is necessary.

However, in the absence of public intervention, the only guard against this problem is the level of consciousness which in turn vitally depends on education and the level of development.

Insufficient government intervention coupled with poor levels of education and development has given rise to high prevalence of free-riding tendency among the tourists visiting various tourist attractions in Bangladesh including those in coastal and marine areas. Besides tourists, other actors in the tourism industry such as private entrepreneurs and street vendors are driven by the same tendency. Tourism in this country has thus become a giant source of environmental pollutions.

Despite the presence of a great number of coastal and marine-based tourist spots, Bangladesh is unable to reap the whole range of benefits from them due to the presence of free-rider problems. For example, Cox's Bazar sea beach would have been far more productive in terms of generating pleasures to tourist and sustainably contributing to the economy if free-rider problem could be properly addressed. Water of this beach is seriously polluted due mainly to tourism activities. And so is air. Unplanned construction of hotels and other infrastructures has destroyed the aesthetic value of the beach and its adjacent areas. Lack of proper regulatory measures provides people incentives to discharge garbage and trashes wherever they want.

One important factor that reinforces free-rider problem is lack of adequate and convenient toilet infrastructure. Such infrastructure is a pressing need because of the fact that among hundreds of tourists many (especially children and sick adults) are not physically fit enough to postpone defecation and urination for long. Hardly any coastal tourist destination in this country has well-equipped public toilet facilities. Thus instances of open defecation and open urination are not very uncommon in beach areas which severely damage the amenity of the beaches.

## **6 POLICY SUGGESTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN COASTAL AND MARINE AREAS**

Prior to 2013, Bangladesh had no effective tourism plan. In 2013, Government has prepared a national tourism plan for the Sundarbans Forest Reserve. The aim of that national tourism plan was to promote ecotourism in the Sundarbans mangroves; the world largest mangrove forest. Along with the Sundarbans tourism plan, government can declare a new tourism plan for coastal and marine tourism. The new tourism plan may be a driving factor to attract both local and international tourists to the coastal and marine tourist spots. The proposed tourism plan should emphasize on the following issues.

### **6.1 Encouraging Private Entrepreneur to Invest Under PPP Initiatives**

It is clearly evident both in the global and local contexts that tourism can be a crucial tool for economic development. Therefore, investment in this sector is extensively important. Due to big minimum required investment and the existence of public goods and quasi-public goods, market failure is most likely to exist in tourism sector. As a result, optimal level of investment will not be achieved through only private sector initiatives. Hence, there must be government intervention in the form of government investment. This statement is more applicable to countries like Bangladesh where market failure is pervasive. Bangladesh government can

invest in infrastructural development of coastal and marine tourism and/or can invite private sector to invest along with the government through Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme. In fact, Bangladesh government enacted a law named Bangladesh Public-Private Partnership Law, 2015 with a view to facilitating the development of core sector public infrastructure and services (“Enactment of the Bangladesh,” 2015). Under this initiative, private entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest along with the government on a profit-sharing basis. This law allows the government to finance for equity and loan and finance for the linked component. Besides, government can invite foreign finance under the foreign portfolio investment. In the foreign portfolio investment, foreigners purchase bonds, equity or cash equivalent and this initiative could be effective in developing infrastructure in the proposed new tourists' spots. Government can also collect money from local financial market by issuing mutual funds for the development of coastal and marine tourism.

## 6.2 Promoting Local Heritage and Culture

Promoting local heritage, festive and culture could be interesting events to the local and foreign tourists to marine tourism. One good example of local culture and festive in existing tourism is in Dublar Char in the Sundarbans. During the November, people from the Hindu community gather in Dublar Char to celebrate an occasion called Rashmela. Now, every year many local and foreign tourists go there to enjoy the occasion. In an attempt to develop sustainable coastal and marine tourism, government can take initiatives to promote local heritage and culture.



Figure 11: Worship at Rashmela. Photo by authors



Figure 12: Worship at Beach in Dublar Char. Photo by authors

## 6.3 Inclusion of Local Communities

Community involvement is one important factor in developing coastal and marine tourism. Inclusion of local communities in the process of tourism development makes the tourism sustainable and everlasting by promoting conservation through income generation for the local people. At first, community people will provide the various services like transports, accommodations and tourists guide to the tourists. But, the literacy rate in the coastal areas is low since coastal communities are mostly poor and dependent on nature. As a result, awareness should be created among local residents and domestic tourists, so that they understand the

importance of the seaside tourism in the economy (Sakib et al., 2016). It is mentionable that inclusion of local communities can lead to better management of natural resources. If local communities are involved, then their livelihood and living standard will increase which will enable them to actively participate in the tourism activities as suppliers of different tourism products. In such a setting, some portion of earnings from tourism activities can be used for the wellbeing of the local communities. Therefore, government should design development plan in such a way that local people get involved and gain a sense of ownership. To reap better outcome from community involvement, government should provide proper training on tourism management and hospitality to the local people.

#### **6.4 On Arrival Visa service for Foreign Tourists**

Many countries are promoting tourism through on arrival visa. Thailand is a good example which provides on arrival visa to the tourists. By providing this facility Thailand has been able to attract a good number of tourists every year. On an average, 1.4 m tourists visited Thailand from 1997 to 2018 (“Thailand tourist arrivals,” n.d.). Such a huge influx of tourists can be attributed to flexible visa procedure. Thus, to promote tourism Bangladesh could implement on arrival visa service to the foreign tourists.

#### **6.5 One-Stop Service for Tourists**

One-stop service is another flexible and easy visa policy that government can adopt for developing tourism in Bangladesh. Like many other sectors, tourism in Bangladesh requires approval from many stakeholders. Those intending to visit the Sundarbans for tourism purpose need approval from Forest Department, Inland Water and Transport Department and Police Department. The procedure of taking approval is same for both local and foreign visitors. People want to avoid administrative hazards. One-stop service, by significantly reducing tourists’ anxiety that arises from administrative complications, can lead to increased flow of tourists to coastal and marine destinations. It is worth mentioning that one-stop service will be very effective for foreign tourists who come directly to Bangladesh maritime zone through cruise ship. Recently, Journey Plus, a Bangladeshi tour operator, organized a trip for foreign tourists. In that trip, Silver Discoverer, a world-famous cruise ship, arrived in Maheshkhali carrying 95 foreign tourists (Mahmud, 2017). The tourists had to stay longer time than usual in the ship as they required administrative permission from various offices including The Chittagong Port Authority, Custom and Visa Division. This created a negative image of Bangladesh tourism. Thus, offering one-stop service for tourists will reduce the hassles leading to increased arrival of foreign tourists.

##### **6.5.1 Pollution Control Measures**

Given the widespread prevalence of pollutions arising from free-rider problem, enactment of specific pollution control policies is urgently needed. Some kind of incentive scheme can be devised that deters actors in the tourism industry from freeriding. For example, provision of adequate well-equipped toilet facilities in different points of a beach can completely eliminate the possibility of the incidents of open defecation and open urination. Littering can be



drastically reduced by keeping well-designed dustbins in appropriate places in beaches and their adjacent areas. Ineligible discharges of garbage must be subject to severe punishment. Existing regulation pertinent to construction of buildings and other infrastructures must be enforced. If need be in changed circumstances, the existing regulation should be changed and modified. More importantly, sound pollution must be strictly controlled. Sound creation must remain confined in sufficiently narrow space so that tourists can enjoy a calm and noise-free ambiance.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Coastal and marine tourism in Bangladesh is evidently expanding. With the increase in the countries per capita GDP, the leisure and recreational activities are gradually becoming very popular. People visit tourist spots during their holidays. Moreover, foreign tourists are also interested to visit various coastal and marine tourist spots such as the Sundarbans, St. Martin's Island and Cox's Bazar sea-beach. But still the extent of foreign tourist arrival in those fascinating spots does not appear to be satisfactory. By improving the existing spots and developing new ones, the country can attract significant number of local and international tourists. However, to make that happen the country should design appropriate tourism related policies. Initiating proper policies is crucial for transforming mass tourism into sustainable coastal and marine tourism in this country. One good example of such transformation is the case of Mauritius. Because of offering eco-tourism, Mauritius successfully attracted the world tourists. FAO reported (TravelMauritius.net) that on average tourists spend 10 days in Mauritius. Thus, experiencing from Mauritius Bangladesh can move forward to offer eco-tourism in marine and coastal tourism sector.

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