

The Role of public private partnerships for the Development of the Tourism Sector in Bangladesh

Introduction:

Tourism has become a very important and dynamic sector in the world economy, particular in the developing country like Bangladesh. Its growth affects not only the activities directly linked to tourism but also other sectors. Bangladesh provides a unique offering and promising appeal to the local and international tourism community for its various destinations, locations and heritage. However, the lack of infrastructure and support facilities constrain the potential opportunities to fully access the diverse tourism sights and attractions in Bangladesh. To maximize the potential of tourism in Bangladesh and attract a wider segment of the national and international tourism community there is a need for significant investment to enhance existing and build new facilities. Government has recently reinvigorated the Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative in Bangladesh as a way of addressing constraints in infrastructure investment in Bangladesh.

02. Role of public private partnership:

The Government of Bangladesh has planned to increase 8% of G.D.P in the vision 2021 to make the country a middle income country in world. For that purpose the rate of investment should be increased to 35-40% from the existing 24-25%. PPP is treated as an important tool for the development of the country's tourism sector. It is also an excellent way to involve the private sector for promoting tourism and thereby increase investment. In a developing country like Bangladesh, government has to give more importance to the social welfare and essential service sector than tourism/hospitality sector due to budget constraints. For that reason, government tourism organizations usually cannot provide competitive service in comparable to the private sectors. In this context, public private partnership is more suitable for the growth of this sector in developing countries. In Bangladesh, to encourage public private partnership investment, Government has already established a public private partnership office. At present they have a guideline to give approval of public private partnership projects. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, an organization under this ministry, works closely with PPP Office to generate ideas about potential projects". A new Law regarding this subject is under consideration of the government. In line with this strategy PPP is now being seen as an important way enhancing investment in the tourism sector.

After enactment of PPP guideline in 2010, some projects have been taken in the tourism sector under public private partnership which is as follows: -

2.1. Development of Tourism and Entertainment village at Parjatan Holiday complex, Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar is one of the most tourist attractive districts of Bangladesh. We have the longest sandy beach of the world in this district. In this district there are lot of Hotel, motel, resort and restaurant. The economy of this district mostly depends on fishing and tourism. The government tourism organization, Bangladesh tourism Corporation owns few/most of the Hotels and motels in this district. Hotel Shaibal is one of them. Hotel shaibal was constructed in 1982 and the total land of the hotel and surrounding area is 186 Acre. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation does not have financial ability to develop tourism facilities using this land. For that reason, initiatives have been taken to construct Hotels, Resorts, Golf course and other Entertainment Centre through public private partnership.

2.2. Establishment of Exclusive Tourist Zone (ETZ) at sabrang Teknaf

Despite the demand of tourist to visit the longest sea beach in the world, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh still not in a position to attract expected number of foreign tourist to visit Cox's bazar for not having proper tourism and entertainment facilities around the area. To attract the foreign tourists, the government has taken a project to establish Exclusive Tourist Zone in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar. To implement the project about 1165 acre land has been identified and initiatives have been taken to attract the investors to establish the ETZ through public private partnership.

2.3. Construction of watch tower in kuakata

Kuakata is also a beautiful place in another district of Bangladesh named Patuakhali. There is a sea beach from where tourist can see both sunrise and sunset. Government of Bangladesh has taken a project under PPP to construct a Watch Tower and develop other tourism and entertainment facilities in this area under PPP.

2.4. Establishment of a 5-star Hotel and other facilities at existing motel compound of BPC at Sylhet

Sylhet is a district with tea gardens and full of natural beauties with Hills, Water falls and natural forest. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation owns a motel in Sylhet which was built in 1980. As it is very old and outdated an initiative has been taken to establish a five star hotel and develop other tourism facilities in that premises through PPP.

2.5. Establishment of International standard tourism complex at existing motel upal compound of BPC at Cox's Bazar

There is another motel named Upal in Cox's Bazar district. This motel was built as a cyclone center in 1960. After the liberation war it was transferred to the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation. The government of Bangladesh has taken initiatives to build an International standard tourism Complex and other tourism facilities in the existing area of the motel through PPP.

3. Sectors where PPP model can be used

The overall scenario of the tourism sector of Bangladesh has the potential to be a prime host of tourist destination as it has a lot of tourists' attractions. The total scenario of tourism products/attractions can be discussed through the following broad categories of products:

3.1. Eco- Tourism products:

Sundarban

The Sundarbans is the world's largest mangrove forest and could be the goldmine for eco-tourism in Bangladesh. The UNESCO has already declared Sundarbans as a world-heritage site with a view to preserve and protect bio-diversity of the rare eco-tourism. The attraction of the Sundarban are the large and small rivers, forest ecology, wild life, beaches, culture, plants, animals (Royal Bengal Tiger, spotted Deer), Otter squirrel, Monkeys, Barking deer, wild boar, Dolphin, reptiles, fish, birds etc. Hiron points, Katka, Kochikhali, Dubla Island, Mandarbari, and Putency Island etc are other important attractions of the Sundarbans.

Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar is the tourist capital of Bangladesh with a 120 km long sandy, straight and drivable beach. Other special attractions of Cox's Bazar are Inani beach (about 30 km from Cox's Bazar full of coral stones), the island of Maheskhali (famous for its Buddhist and Hindu temples and a dry fish industry), Teknaf (the southern-most point of Bangladesh), Ramu, Sonadia, Himchari, St. Martin Island (only Coral Island) etc.

Hilly Districts

The three Hilly Districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban are inhabited by a good number of tribes, with their distinctive cultures, rituals and traditions. Chimbuk, Ruma, Rain-Khyoung valleys, Keocradang and Tazinsdang are highly attractive products in the hill tracts.

3.2. Archaeological Tourism Products

- ❖ Paharpur
- ❖ Mahasthangor
- ❖ Mainamati
- ❖ Shat-Gumbad Mosque, Bagherhat
- ❖ Kantajir Temple, Dinajpur

3.3. Historical Tourism Products

- ❖ Lalbagh Fort
- ❖ Sonargaon
- ❖ World War II Cemetery
- ❖ Gandhi Asram etc.

