

Homestay tourism on rise in Bangladesh : Gateway to culture, community

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 03 May, 2025



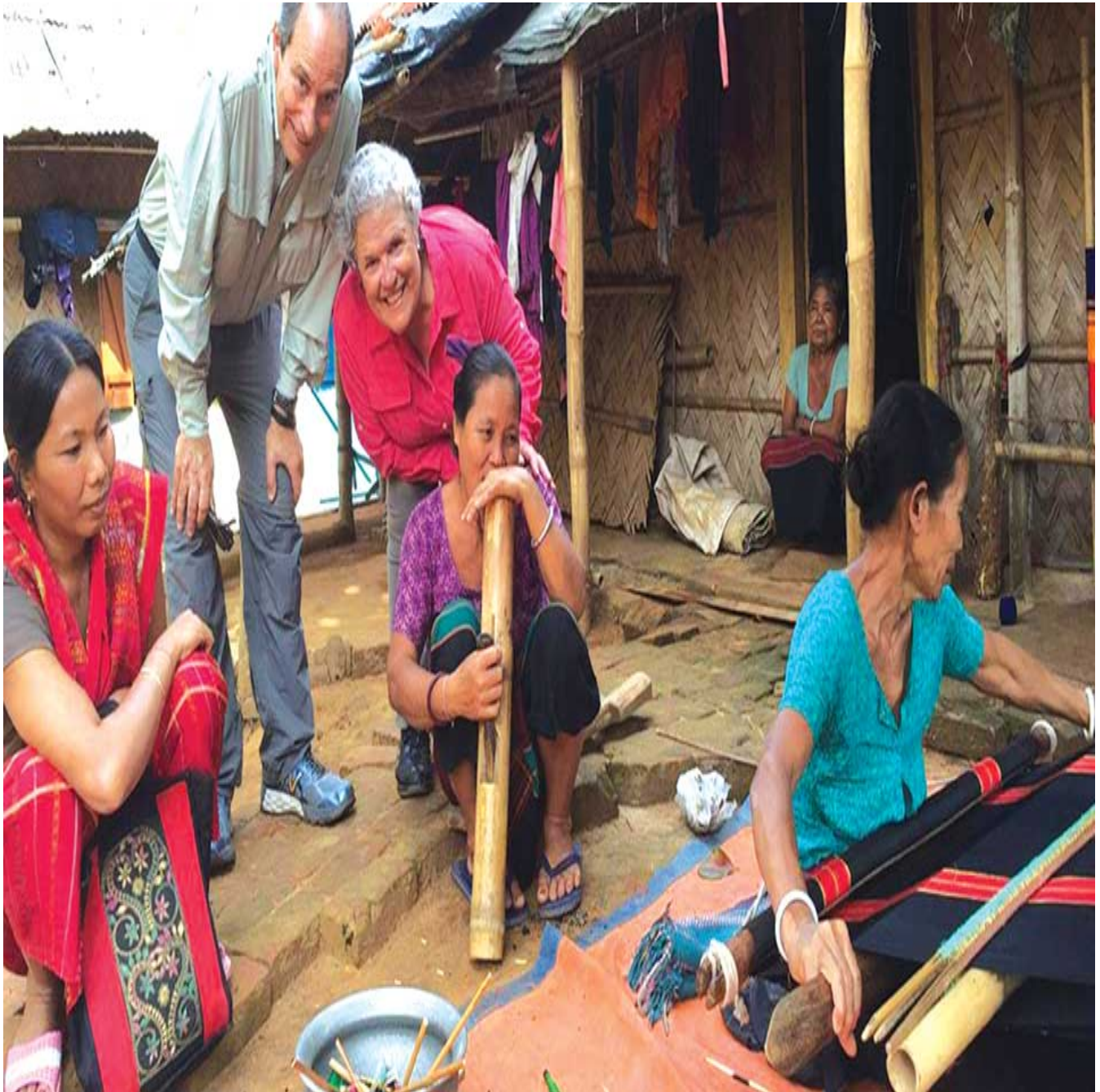
Dhaka : Homestay tourism is gaining momentum across Bangladesh as travelers increasingly seek authentic, community-based experiences over traditional hotel stays. From the lush hills of Bandarban to the tea estates of Sylhet and the riverine villages of Barishal, homestay tourism is emerging as a promising model that benefits both visitors and local hosts.

Growing trend

In recent years, the global tourism industry has witnessed a paradigm shift. Modern tourists, particularly younger generations and international backpackers, prioritize cultural immersion and environmental sustainability. Bangladesh, with its rich tapestry of ethnic communities, scenic rural landscapes, and underexplored regions, is now tapping into this trend through homestay tourism.

Homestays allow tourists to live with local families, eat traditional food, participate in their daily lives, and learn about indigenous customs firsthand. In return, hosts earn supplementary income and take pride in sharing their culture.

Proprietor of Journey Plus Taufiq Rahman, a renowned tour operator, has taken plenty of foreign tourists to homestay projects in Paharpur and Munshiganj. He was also involved in training the locals in these two projects, with support from Bangladesh Tourism Board.



Foreign tourists enjoy homestay tourism in Bangladesh for authentic, community-based experiences

A homestay operator in Rangamati informed, they have visitors from Europe who stay for a few days. The tourists help them cook, join in their festivals, and learn how to weave textiles-like distant relatives.

Government, NGO involvement

To promote rural tourism, Bangladesh Tourism Board has launched pilot programs in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Khulna Sundarbans region, and the haor areas of Sunamganj, among others. Collaborating with NGOs and development partners, these initiatives offer training to local families on hospitality, hygiene, safety, and basic English communication.

Homestay tourism is a low-investment, high-impact model, according to BTB officials. It supports inclusive economic growth, especially for women and marginalized groups, and encourages preservation of local heritage.

International organizations such as the UNDP and Swisscontact have also supported homestay networks by providing micro-grants, promoting eco-friendly practices, and connecting host families with digital booking platforms.



Taufiq Rahman, CEO of Journey Plus, conducting training session on homestay tourism among locals in Paharpur

Cultural, economic impact

Homestays are proving to be more than just a bed-and-breakfast alternative. They serve as cultural bridges, where urban dwellers and foreign tourists can experience the diversity of Bangladesh's 50+ indigenous communities and rural Bengali traditions.

A European tourist while visiting Rajshahi said that she stayed in a Santhal village and it was unforgettable. They danced around a fire, helped in the rice fields, and learned more about Bangladesh in one week than they did from any guidebook.

Economically, the model keeps tourism revenue within the community, reducing leakage to large hotel chains. In some areas, local youth are

trained as guides and performers, while artisans sell handmade crafts directly to guests.

According to a 2024 Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation report, families involved in homestays have seen their monthly income increase by 20-40 percent, depending on tourist traffic.

Challenges, sustainability

Despite its promise, homestay tourism in Bangladesh faces challenges. Infrastructure in remote areas-such as roads, electricity, internet, and sanitation-can be underdeveloped. Moreover, not all families have adequate training or resources to meet basic guest expectations, which can lead to inconsistent experiences.

There are also concerns about cultural commodification and the risk of losing traditional lifestyles if tourism is not carefully managed.

Experts emphasize the importance of responsible tourism. Industry experts claimed, the country needs community-led planning, clear guidelines, and strong local governance to ensure homestay tourism remains sustainable and respectful.

Taufiq Rahman also suggested the government to come up with a homestay tourism policy soon. He further stressed to find out new destinations for homestay projects with tourist attractions nearby.

Furthermore, training the locals and funding them for homestay projects are essential too in order to boost the sector, Taufiq Rahman urged.

The rise of homestay tourism aligns with Bangladesh's Vision 2041, which aims to boost rural development and diversify tourism beyond Cox's Bazar and Dhaka. With the right support and regulation, homestays could become a cornerstone of Bangladesh's tourism identity.