

## Bangladesh, Sri Lanka to develop joint tourism initiative

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Dhaka: Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are preparing to launch a joint tourism initiative aimed at strengthening cooperation in the travel and hospitality sectors, recognizing tourism's growing contribution to both economies.

During foreign office consultations (FOC) held in Colombo on November 6, the two countries discussed ways to collaborate on green tourism, with Bangladesh proposing the creation of joint tourism circuits focusing on tea and Buddhist heritage. The two sides also agreed to work towards finalizing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on tourism cooperation, according to a statement from Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The meeting was co-chaired by Aruni Ranaraja, Secretary of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism, and Asad

Alam Siam, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka welcomed over two million international visitors in 2024, while Bangladesh, despite its world-renowned attractions such as Cox's Bazar—the world's longest natural beach—and the Sundarbans mangrove forest, receives only 600,000 to 700,000 tourists annually.

Both sides also discussed the possibility of enhancing maritime connectivity, including potential port links between Chattogram and Colombo, to support trade and tourism.

Sri Lanka encouraged Bangladeshi investors to explore opportunities in infrastructure development, logistics, agriculture, and tourism ventures, while Bangladesh invited Sri Lankan investment in its export processing zones (EPZs), special economic zones (SEZs), and API industrial parks.

Dhaka highlighted key sectors for collaboration, including pharmaceuticals, ICT, renewable energy, agro-processing, leather, automobiles, light engineering, and hospitality. The two sides also discussed expanding cooperation in banking and financial services to enhance bilateral economic stability.

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