

Safe tourism : Don't only invest on infrastructure, but on people too

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Tourism's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country is estimated at 3.02 per cent by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). In local currency, this amounts to BDT 76,690.7 crore.

The sector also accounted for 8.07 per cent of total employment, according to the BBS's Tourism Satellite Account 2020, which was based on the data of the fiscal year of 2018-19.

In December, Md Hannan Mia, Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), expressed the government's plans to increase tourism's contribution to the national GDP to 10 per cent in the coming days.

For this purpose, the government is investing on heavy infrastructure to flourish tourism further. For instance, a rail line will connect Chattogram to Cox's Bazar, an expressway through Banshkhali will reduce the distance from Chattogram to Cox's Bazar by 54 km, while the recently built bridge on Payra River established a unique connection with Kuakata beach.

Also, high end hotels across Bangladesh are increasing in number lately and new liquor trading licenses are being issued to new bars and hotels.

Moreover, there are plans to brand Bangladesh abroad, beautify major cities and to undertake many other activities to increase the number of tourists in the country.

However, safety at tourist sites has become a major concern lately, especially in Cox's Bazar. The beach destination is currently buzzing with huge crowds on weekends during the winter as it is the peak season for domestic tourism in Bangladesh.

In this peak season, restaurateurs are charging up to BDT 400 for dal-bhat while the hoteliers are charging up to BDT 5,000 for a BDT 1,000 room, according to reports. Such unethical practices make travel in peak seasons more like a burden for people. To generate tourism growth, we must ensure safe and cost-effective tour packages rather.

Travellers now claim a trip to Cox's Bazar almost requires the same amount of cost needed to visit a neighbouring country.

Hence, the authorities concerned must take measures to ensure law and order in tourist sites.

During peak seasons Cox's Bazar welcomes several thousand tourists. However, compared to the number of tourists which is in lacs, there are only about 200 tourist police available. Manpower increase is becoming crucial with every passing day.

Consistent patrol on the beach in Cox's Bazar is essential especially during visiting hours to prevent dangerous incidents from happening. On top of it, the number of tourists in Cox's Bazar is increasing year on year. Therefore, to keep pace with it, uniformed strike forces and tourist police should be posted more in the beach destination.