

STATUS OF “KUAKATA” A NEGLECTED NATURAL SCENIC RESOURCE OF BANGLADESH

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Abstract

There are many years since we have independent from the foreign ruling. But we are now in the least developed country because of lacking of the integration and inter-coordination among the different political, economical and social sectors. Though we are in the loaded position with the vast population, it would be the most resourceful by the proper nourishment and proper adoption with education, knowledge and training for the sustainable utilization of the God- gifted enormous natural resources. Kuakata the second largest Sea-beach is another one of the natural scenic resource of our country which is still now under negligence and mismanagement including its demographic development. By the proper planning and inter-sectoral coordination Kuakata can be turned into a most effective and largest economical source of the national revenue and common people livelihood. There has been tried to present the present demographic, educational, Hospitalization, transportation, present and potential resources and other tourism facilities in this study. Here is tried to highlight what have in this tourism place and what are to be needed in kuakata.

Keywords: Kuakata, Scenic Resources, Facilities, Char, Forest

Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important economic activities in the world today that directly generates services, products, foreign currency, employment and investments (Anonymous, 2005).

Ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry, with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool (Wood, 2002) and this tool can be operational when local communities are educated, trained and motivated to take ecotourism as an alternative and

additional income generating activity which facilitates and promotes environmental conservation (Pakdeepinit, 2007)

Bangladesh is a land of scenic beauty. Cox's Bazar, Kuakata, Sundarban, Chittagong Hill Tracts (Rangamati, Bandarban, And Khagrachari), Madhobkunda water-falls;, Haors in South-Eastern greater Sylhet districts, Tea gardens and Lawachhara rain forest etc are the most visited spots by our local, national, and foreign tourists.

According to statistics of the country's National Tourism Authority (NTA), a total of 349,837 foreign tourists visited Bangladesh in 2008, about 21 percent higher than that in 2007. NTA also noticed that, the incomes from the tourism sector reduced to 4. 60 billion taka (\$65.7 million) in 2008 from 5.27 billion taka (\$75.3 million) in 2007.This indicates the necessity of taking development and management steps to ensure sustainability of the tourist spots.

After Cox's Bazar, another attractive sea beach in our country and the world is the Kuakata sea beach known as 'Ocean's Daughter. It is about 32 km long including 17 km long natural forest which is exceptional to the Cox's Bazar sea beach. It has a vast contribution to our tradition, culture, history, society, economy and environment. About 115000 tourists visit this appealing place in spite of having numerous limitations in contrast to other tourism spots in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the study

This study had the following two objectives.

- I. Identification of the potential resources of the study area
- II. Assessment of the status of the tourism facilities in Kuakata

Methods and Materials

The Study area

Kuakata is a panoramic sea beach on the southernmost tip of Bangladesh. It is situated at the 21° 48'55.98" north latitude and 90°07'18.62" east longitude by its municipal central zero point. Nationally it is a newly (proposed in 15th December 2010 and gazetted or implemented in May 2011) declared municipality area under the latachapli union, kalapara Upazila, Patuakhali district in Barishal division. It is 350 km away from capital city Dhaka.

Data collection and analysis

The primary data were collected through the open-ended and in-depth qualitative questionnaire process. The investigation was conducted with associated personnels of the Department of Environment (DOE); Forest Department; Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation; Municipal authority; Hotel

and Motel management Association; and LGED, Kuakata. Local people opinion about the issues of road and transportation facilities, living standard, hotel and motel condition, municipal policy and actions; national forest status, status of tourism development and the present condition of the sea-beach were collected for the study purpose. Collected data and information from the questionnaire were arranged and analyzed using content analysis method.

Results and Discussion

All the collected information was documented by using the following category of options and issues of study topic:

Educational Status

There has been a table about the educational status of Kuakata below which contains the total students, total institutions related to secondary and higher level as well as the total teachers inclusive their proportion to total students.

Table3.1: Educational status

| Institution | Total number | Total teacher | Total student | Ratio of Student/Teachers |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Primary school govt. | 1 | 9 | 385 | 385/9=42.78 |
| Primary school(reg.) | 2 | 4+4 | 210+192 | 210/4=52.5 192/4=48 |
| Madrasa (Reg.) | 1 | 19 | 340 | 340/19=8.5 |
| High school | 1 | 12 | 324 | 324/12=27 |
| College | 0 | | | |

There were few primary level institutions in Kuakata but the total amount of teachers than normal requirement for good learning processes were more less. Besides these the unavailability of higher educational opportunities in and around this region is the main drawback of educational services.

Health services

From the study, an overview about the health service status was found over Kuakata by which total health facilities and institutions have been brought up enlisted in the table below.

Table 3.2: Health service status

| Institution | Total number | Employee |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Community clinic | 2 (under construction) | |
| Health complex | 1 | 2(MBBS), 4(nurse) |
| Family planning center | No permanent center | 2 |

There was just one 20 bed established health complex in Kuakata with a few employee which is not enough to meet the demands of health services of the surrounded (about 5500) people. It was clear that the health services in Kuakata were inadequate compared to total population and its use by a lot of tourists around the year.

Road and Transportation Facilities

The Parjatan spot Kuakata is situated in the straight southern part close to Bay of Bengal and 320 away from the capital city Dhaka. It is 77 km and 22 km far from the district town Patuakhali and sub-district (Upazilla) town Kalapara consecutively. The total road system Dhaka to Patuakhali was of two lanes completed and the rest part Patuakhali to Kuakata was belonged to one lane being accompanied with two lanes under construction inclusive five traditional ferry system which were used to across five rivers. The settlement of bridges over the five rivers could be treated as Mawa (The biggest river system in Bangladesh- Faridpur to Shariatpur): no action taken; Khebukhali: Under proposal; Khepupara : 25% completed; Hazipur : 15% completed; Alipur : 75% completed consecutively. The total time spent to reach Kuakata from Dhaka was about twelve hours owing to five ferry systems which deals with seven hours more than the normal required time. It will be only four and half hours to five hours to reach the sea daughter Kuakata if the five bridges are completed.

Resources

The zone Kuakata is full of enormous resources of different types. There are greater variation within resources types due to geographical setting and different climatic and geologic condition. The resource of Kuakata can be grouped into the following type:

- i. Natural Resources**
- ii. Cultural Resources**
- i. Natural Resources**

Natural resources are such compounds or physical entities which come from nature and which can be used directly or indirectly to the human well being and can be turned into another types of goods or products. The natural resources of Kuakata can be classified and listed into the following way:



Fig: Image of Kuakata Beach

Scenic resources

These types of resources refer to natural view and out looking of the natural sites. These resources can also be termed as tourism resources which are the main factors of tourism market. There are a number of scenic resources in Kuakata which can provide greater refreshment and relieve of mind from the busy and monotonous citizenry life. Some scenic or tourism resources are:

Traveling Fatra forest

Fatra forest is near Kua-Kata. This is extended part of the Sundarbans. Visitors can observe the forest's beauty by entering into the deeper by boat through the sea branch river. Although Sundari is the main tree there are other sorts of trees found in Sundarbans. In Fatra forest people can come across, animals like monkey, jackals, Bagdas (One type of small tiger) etc. Visiting Fatra forest by trawler is a life-time experience. Travelers can come across big waves like 30 feet in highest and it is thrilling how the boatmen pass through or avoid these waves. Government took initiative to create an eco-park here. There are lakes, concert benches, toilet facilities and brick built lames through the forest. There are few stalls a going way for safe placement of the boats, cooling arrangement for picnic parties.



Fig: Image of Fatrar Forest

Jhau Forest

Jhau forest has been created by Government initiative. The sight is beautiful. Tourists come here for recreation. Early in the morning the sun-rising can be viewed from the sun rising can be viewed from this corner.



Fig: Image of Jhau Forest

Gangamati

Gangamati is situated to the east of Jhau forest. It is about 10 km far from the central point of municipality. Though there are not individual road

and transportation facilities, it is the most appealing and mind cheering place of Kuakata. While going there are beautiful patcher of forests, The fresh and blue color water of Gongamoti lake, bushi or isolated big trees, sands etc. Gangamoti is a forest where tourists can see different sorts of birds. Walking along the lake is one another wonderful rememberable events of tourists. It is said that Gongamati is the main and most beautiful place during the travelling period in Kuakata. So tourist’s excursion can be incomplete if they don’t pay a visit to Gangamoti.

Labour Char

It is situated 7 km away at the west side along the beach. There is about 100 acre forest containing Keora, Korai, Geoa trees. There are found prawn collectors, lot of nests of Moumasi.

Lal- kakrar Char (Red Crab lands of Sand-Deposition)

It is near the Gongamoti Char where the red crabs are available. it attracts the visited tourists by viewing the distinctive red color crabs, fishing activities and large number small and big sand dunes along the calm beaches.

Kuakata National park

It is situated 1.5 km away from the zero point at the East along the beach. It was recorded as Eco-park in the forest department ministry. Recently, it has been declared as another national park in Bangladesh in late 2010. There has been given a table over the Kuakata national park below which represents the basic information related to the park collected from the perspective authority while it was being studied.

Table 3.3. Basic Information of Kuakata national park

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Category: | National Park |
| Area: | 1613 Ha |
| Established: | 2010 |
| Forest Type: | Coastal Mangrove Plantations |
| District: | Patuakhali |
| Bio-Ecological Zone: | Saline Tidal Floodplain |
| Physiography : | Ganges Tidal Flood Plain |
| Coordinate: | 210 48'-210 51' N and 9006' - 90013' E |
| Administration: | Mohipur Forest Range, Patuakhali Forest Division |
| Forest Beat(S): | Gongamoti, Kuakata and Khajura |
| Total Employee: | 14 (Gongamoti-3, Kuakata-7, Khajura-4) |

Kuakata National Park, which was previously known as Kuakata Eco Park, is situated in Patuakhali. The park, located on the seashore, comprises coastal mangrove plantations. The park has an area of 1613 ha including Latachapni, Gangamati, Khajura, Tengragiri and Fatra forests. The national park, surrounded by mangroves, has an artificial lake streaming through it.

Though Keora and Bain are the main plant species of Kuakata National Park, various plant-based resources, such as, Reeds, Catkin, Grass, Hental, Helipata and Mailla are found in plenty throughout the area. Formation of the depression in the sea and the appearance of the new moon make the sea turbulent and the large waves strike the park's seashore with force. If protective measures are not taken, the biodiversity of Kuakata National Park might be damaged.

Material resources

These types of resources are the direct benefit of the resources which may be living or non-living materials. Some of the material resources of this area are fishes, crabs, Prawn, Minerals, Dry fishes, wood and Sands etc.

Spatial resources

These types of resources are also referred as facilitative resources which provide adequate and suitable space to install new project or industry providing raw materials, fuel, transportation opportunities and cost effective labor forces. Some of the potential facilitative resources are:

- Ramnabad Channel as third sea-port of the country
- Adequate and suitable space for ship breaking and making industry
- Space for settlement of larger dry fish and shrimp- culture processing industry
- Suitable spaces for coastal afforestation.
- Space for international quality stadium



Fig: Image of Ramnabad Channel

Cultural resources

It refers to the existing of the historical background of different communities and evolution of the social and cultural development throughout the country. It also includes different norms, beliefs, custom, spiritual activities, and religious institutions etc. Some of the cultural resources are:

- Central Shima Buddhist Temple
- Misri para Buddhist Temple
- Ancient well (Kua in Bengali)
- Rakhain handicraft
- Religious festival “Rashmela”



Fig: Image of Buddhist Temple

There were many numbers of places to visit during the travelling of Kuakata. Each spot has a unique and distinctive characteristic making a natural arrangement to cordially receive the nature tour interested people. It could be fluently said that the main demands of tourists associated to tourism spots must be fulfilled while traveling the Kuakata.

Hotel and Motel Status

Hotels and motels availability together with their respective services and facilities is one of the major contributing factors for the highly development and enlightening of a tourism spot. There was found a view over the status of hotels and motels in Kuakata while it was being assessed and the outcome were as like as given below within a table.

Table 3.4: Hotel and Motel status

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Total number of Hotel and Motel | 52 (40 under Association, 12 out of associations) |
| Best qualit | AC with spacious room and required amenities |
| Total employee | about 230 |
| Security | Available in few hotels |
| Transportation for different spot | None |
| Tourist guide | No trained, qualified and available guide |
| Activity | Only beach cleaning two times in a year, policy guidelines in decision making to the authority |

Though Kuakata is one of the best popular and outstanding beautiful beaches in Bangladesh and world, the development of hotel and motel are still now poor quality and few were of medium quality.

Municipal Policy, Actions and Services

Though there is a local governmental municipal authority, hotel management organization, fishing organization, transport and other business related organizations, all of the municipal and health and sanitation facilities are in darkness in this tourism area. The total actions programs of municipality could be represented according to the following way listed within a table below.

Table 3.5: Status of municipal actions

| | |
|---|---|
| Water supply | Under proposal |
| Drainage system | Under proposal |
| Sanitation and sewerage services | Under proposal |
| Waste management | None |
| Plan for market settlement | None |
| Plan for hotel and motel settlement | None |
| Awareness building and training program | None |
| Actions for the development of tourism products | None |
| Beach management | None |
| Plan for Automobiles stand | Close to zero point (only 40 meter away from sea beach) |
| Lighting and tourist safety measures | None |

From the above table, it could be defined as the whole contribution of municipality on their respected actions is still now in under proposal and out of proposal. So the he total municipal development was at lag behind yet.

Tourist's facilities

Tourists are encouraged and motivated to go one spots by its existing basic and recreational opportunities. The existing tourist facilities during staying period were as followed as given below with a table collected through the assessment in Kuakata.

Table 3.6: Status of tourist facilities

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Cabin (6m x 6m) | Good indigenous architecture |
| Guest House (2 no.) | Poor services |
| Beach market stalls (retail mall) | Untidy |
| Beach market stalls (local restaurants) | Unhygienic |
| Hotel | Poor quality |
| Restaurant and fast food | None |
| Spot Indicating sign | None |
| Products in affordable prices | Uncontrolled |

There was no good quality hotel and restaurants for serving quality and safe food to the local and international tourists. Though some middle class accommodation facilities with air-condition and spacious well decorated rooms were available, their inadequacy, the deficiency of installation of spot indication signs and the incompatible product prices were the major concerns for the sustainable and more beneficial development of ecotourism sectors of Kuakata. From the above table, it was clear that the basic requirement facilities of tourists in Kuakata were in poor condition.

Community Supporting Infrastructure and Services on Beach Facilities

The community supporting infrastructures and services in the beach of Kuakata has been listed within the following factors of facilities with a table given below.

Table 3.7: Beach related facilities

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Beach Access road – Local government | Loose sand, not good |
| Parking lot | Not defined, Loose sand, chaotic |
| Piped-borne water or borehole | Not available |
| Health centre | None |
| Beach safety – (Divers) | Not available |
| Public toilet facility | None |
| Beach changing Rooms | None |
| Telecommunication | None |
| Power supply | None |
| Solid waste disposal | Not good |
| Park or community square | None |
| Cottage craft centre | None |

There were hardly service in the Kuakata beach due to the improper attention and careless of the local and national government, private, public and community sectors. The table reveals that the beach related basic services (i.e. road, safety, power supply, dress changing rooms, public toilets, telecommunications etc.) were scarcely than a standard and developed beach.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Kuakata is a place of natural, cultural and historical importance. But it is still in much behind from the golden touch of development and progress to all sectors of social and environmental aspects. It was clear from the study that there were no lacking in terms of natural resources as well as tourist resources, after all it is not gaining its potential and expected benefits from its vast valuable resources.

Finally, we can find the outcomes from the study findings that there had not been sufficient and required structural, social, political and economical development since the country became independent. In spite of having a great contribution and significance on the local and national economy, this area was underprivileged of necessary standard of living in daily life. Still, the area were not been well known to the good educational opportunities, accommodation facilities, health services, safety measures from natural disasters, required financial and technological support of fishermen and farmers during the hampering of their crops by salt water intrusion and cyclone, storm- surges and off-season of fishing. The people of kuakata were the most deprived of easy, comfortable, cost and time effective transportation facilities. There was lack of pure and safe drinking water due to the geographical setting onto the closure Bay-of-Bengal.

Although it was a municipality and populated area besides a popular tourism spot, the educational facilities were not adequate. In terms of health services it had a worst quality opportunities provided by the local and national government. It revealed that the quality and services of the Hotels and Motels are mostly poor by the result. There were no municipal actions, policies and services required for the living people and tourists.

The study also determined that the condition of the existing tourist facilities related to basic requirement and beach recreation were at great deficiency. No planned action and policy were available here for beach development facilitating and influencing all types of tourist. There should be installed all types of beach facilities considering national and international tourist in Kuakata. Transport and power sectors should be improved as soon as possible. Overall a well documented, referenced and verified development plan and policy must be urgently implemented from the local and national government to save and utilize the God gifted wealth sustainably for the well being of human being, nature as well as environment.

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