

CHAPTER FOUR

TOURISM RESOURCES AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT KUAKATA

4.1 Background of Kuakata as a Tourist Spot

Kuakata sea beach is nice, attractive, clam and quiet. A tourist can enjoy the rare scene of sunrise and sunset; vast sea, calm and quiet beach, shell collection, surfing and diving, bathing and man made forests, natural forest (*Gangamoti Reserve Forest, and Lembur Charer Ban*), pine forest, coconut grove, teak garden, greenery along the beach, winter birds, sailing boats, fry collection, fish drying village, fishing activities and the fishermen community while walking along the beach. Kuakata sea beach is about 17 km. long and 450-900 meter wide at different points. The east and west edges of Kuakata sea beach have merged with two unions: e.g. Dhulsar and Latachapli of Kalapara Upazila. The width of the beach just at Kuakata resort site has been reduced due to unplanned tourism development and unauthorized encroachment.

4.2 Exposure of Kuakata

Kuakata is exposed as tourist spot through different media. The media are mainly the daily newspapers, magazines, tourist guidebooks, (publications published by different tour operators [private and Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC)]), different TV channels [Bangladesh Television (BTV) and private TV channels (Ekushey, ATN Bangla etc.)]. Kuakata has also been exposed as a tourist spot in the textbooks. People who previously visited Kuakata are also providing exposure to Kuakata.



The rare scene of sunrise and sunset and the colourful Rakhain community of Kuakata were mainly exposed in the last few years. Other attractions which are exposed now a days are the vast sea, calm and quiet sea beach, *Ras festival* [bathing in the Bay of Bengal during the *Ras Purnima* (full moon)], beautiful scenery of green coconut grove, teak garden and pine forest, migratory winter birds in the virgin sanctuary, sailing boats in the sea, fishing in small boats, fry collection, shell collection, surfing and diving in the seas, pagoda, the wells, the largest Buddhist statue of the sub continent (at Misripara). Beautiful sight seeing areas e.g. *Ganga Motir Ban* (a forest near 100 ft. wide *Ganga Motir Canal*, 3 km. away from Kuakata towards the East), *Pathrar Ban* (offers beautiful scenery of the continuous mangrove forest, about 10 km. away from Kuakata towards the West), *Sundarbans*, the world largest mangrove forest and a world heritage site (about 35 km. away from Kuakata towards the West) are also exposed.

4.3 Tourism and tourist pattern at Kuakata

Tourist season at Kuakata normally starts from October and continues up to April. November, December, January, February, and March are the peak months for tourism. Tourists are very few at Kuakata during the dull season (May to September). As tourism at Kuakata is seasonal, majority of tourists are found to visit Kuakata during the peak season.

Ras festival of Kuakata is held in the month of November, which is very significant to the Hindu devotees. They believe that they get rid of sins if they bathe in the sea during *Ras Purnima* (full moon). For this reason, more Hindu tourists are found to attend the Ras festival of Kuakata. According to local people, about 30,000 to 50,000 tourists (mainly Hindu devotees) attended the Ras festival in the year 2000. But only 2,000-2,500 tourists (including Hindu Devotees) attended the Ras festival of the year 2001 (field visit, 2001). The main reason behind this is the socio-political unrest in the country that prevailed in the post election era. The Hindu devotees who attended the Ras festival mentioned that most of the devotees felt insecure to attend the festival due to the fear of unexpected incidence, violence and pressures on the Hindu community all over the country.

Majority of the people of Bangladesh are Muslim and Ramadan is their holy month (December in 2001). They generally do not visit Kuakata during this month. For this reason, tourists are also found to be minimum at Kuakata in the month of Ramadan.



Table 4.1: Tourist pattern at Kuakata in the year 2001.

Month	No. of tourist visited Kuakata
January	2000
February	2200
March	2300
April	1600
May	900
June	700
July	800
August	500
September	500
October	1100
November	4000
December	1800

Source: Hotel survey and field survey at Kuakata, 2001.

Table 4.1 reveals that 1,100 tourists visited Kuakata in October, the starting month of tourist season and 2,300 tourists in February, the peak month of tourist season. Only 500 tourists were found to visit Kuakata in August, the dull month. 4000 tourists visited Kuakata in November. The number of tourists was found higher in this month due to Ras festival.

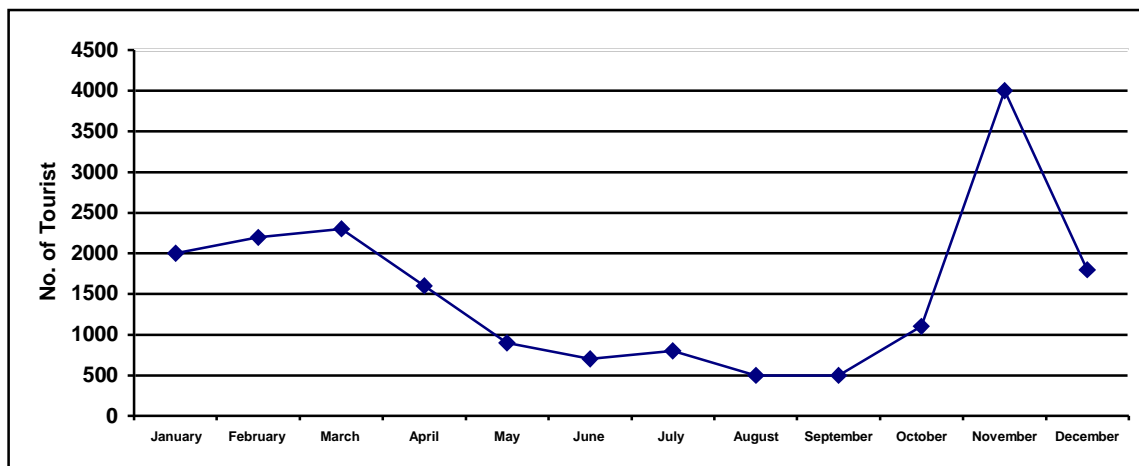


Figure: Tourist pattern at Kuakata in the year 2001.

Tourism pattern at Kuakata

Tourism activities at Kuakata are mainly watching the sunrise and sunset; and enjoying the colorful Rakhain community. Other activities include diving and bathing in the sea (Bay of Bengal), walking on the sandy beach along the sea, watching the beautiful scenery of coconut grove, migratory winter birds in the virgin sanctuary, green pine forest, sailing boats in the sea, fishing in small boats, fry collection, shell collection, surfing, visiting pagoda, watching the wells, the largest Buddhist statue of the sub continent (at Misripara, Kuakata). There are beautiful sight seeing areas nearby e.g. *Ganga Motir Ban* (a forest near the 100 feet wide *Ganga Motir Canal*, 3 km. away from Kuakata towards the East), *Pathrar Ban* (offers beautiful scenery of the mangrove forest, about 10 km. away from Kuakata towards the West), *Sundarbans*, the world’s largest mangrove forest and a world heritage site (about 35 km. away from Kuakata towards the West).



4.4 Expectation and Experience of tourist

Expectation and experience of tourists vary based on their age, sex, education, religion, occupation, economic condition and standard of living. Before reaching Kuakata, the tourists expect to enjoy all its attractions in a comfortable and convenient manner. But after reaching Kuakata, in a hectic, uncomfortable and long journey they become tired. Accommodation and eating facilities are not satisfactory at Kuakata. The surrounding attractions are not yet been properly developed and explored with transportation and other facilities. These prohibit the tourists to stay at Kuakata for a long period and visit all the attractions. The tourists often can not visit and enjoy the surrounding attractions. Due to cloudy weather, sometimes the tourists can not see the sunset and sunrise. The fluctuating hotel fare, prices of food and souvenir items at Kuakata also bring negative impact on the tourists. Thus tourists who are economically well off, young, having experience of visiting more resort areas (come to Kuakata after a long journey) and can not enjoy the attractions as per their expectation, often have bad impression about Kuakata.



Tourism Development at Kuakata at a Glance

No. of hotels	21 (Private-17 and Government-4)
No. of restaurants	30
No. of picnic spots/tourist spots (other than the sea beach)	6 (Coconut garden, Teak garden, Pine Forest, <i>Pathrar ban</i> , <i>Ganga Motir ban</i> and <i>Lebur char</i>)
No. of Burmese shops	25
No. of mosque	02
No. of pagoda	01
No. of temple/mandir	01
No. of buses at different routes from Kuakata	18
Nearest fish landing and trade centers	Alipur and Mohipur
No. of Markets	04
No. of Buddhist statue with specialty	02 (one is 22 ft. high at Mstripara Pagoda and the other weighs one ton and made of eight metals at the Kuakata Pagoda)
No. of fish depot	06
No. of Rakhain families	12

4.5 Tourist Survey and Interview Findings

30 tourists (27 male and 3 female) who visited Kuakata from different corners of the country, were interviewed and surveyed by this study. The survey and interview results are discussed in the next section:

4.5.1 Educational qualification

Table 4.2: Educational levels of tourists visiting Kuakata

Education	Frequency	Percentage
HSC	9	30%
B. A. /B. Sc.	12	40%
M. A. /M. Sc.	9	30%
Total	30	100%

Source: Tourist survey at Kuakata, 2001.

Table 4.2 reveals that 40% of the tourists had education level of B. A. or B. Sc. Among the rest, 30% have M. A. or M. Sc. degree and 30% possessed HSC level education.

4.5.2 Profession

Table 4.3: Profession of the tourists visiting Kuakata

Profession	Frequency	Percentage
Government Service	4	13%
Private Service	12	40%
Business	4	13%
Student	10	34%
Total	30	100%

Source: Tourist survey at Kuakata, 2001.

Table 4.3 shows that majority of the tourists (40%), are in private service, 13% is in government service, and another 13% are in business. 34% of the tourists are students.

4.5.3 Days spent at Kuakata

Table 4.4: Days spent by tourists at Kuakata

Duration (days)	Frequency	Percentage
1	4	13%
2	16	54%
3	4	13%
4	3	10%
5+	3	10%
Total	30	100%

Source: Tourist survey at Kuakata, 2001.

Table 4.4 reveals that majority of the tourists, (54%) stayed at Kuakata for 2 days. Only 10% tourists stayed at Kuakata for more than 3 days. 13% tourists stayed at Kuakata for only 1 day.

4.5.4 Attractions visited

Table 4.5: Attractions enjoyed by tourists at Kuakata

Attractions	Frequency	Percentage
Sea beach	24	80%
Sun set	23	77%
Sun rise	21	70%
Sea	18	60%
Green groves	9	30%
Fishing and fisherman community	7	23%
Fry collection	9	30%
Fish processing and fish drying	6	20%
Bathing / Diving	15	50%
Ras festival	8	27%

Source: Tourist survey at Kuakata, 2001.

As there are a number of attractions at Kuakata, a tourist is found to enjoy more one attraction. Table 4.5 reveals that 80%, 77% and 70% tourists enjoyed the sea beach, sunset and sunrise respectively. 60% and 50% tourists enjoyed the sea and bathing/diving in the sea. 30% tourists enjoyed fishing and fishermen community. Ras festival of Kukata takes place once a year. It normally starts in mid November and lasts for 2-3 days. The tourists, who visit Kuakata during that time, can enjoy the festival. Fish drying season starts from October and continues up to May/June. The places where fish drying takes place are about 1-3 kilometers away from the main beach of Kuakata. If tourists visit Kuakata during the fish drying season and want to enjoy the fish drying, they can see it. The tourists are often found to be discouraged to watch fish drying due to long distance walking and lack of transport facility towards these spots.



4.5.5 Origins of tourists, and travel pattern and transports availed

Table 4.6: Origin of tourists, travel pattern and transports availed

Origin of tour	Frequency	Percent	Mode	Frequency	Transport cost
Dhaka	16	54	Bus	7	200
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch	9	
			Private transport		
Barisal	3	10	Bus	3	120
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch		
			Private transport		
Patuakhali	2	6	Bus	2	80
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch		
			Private transport		
Khulna	3	10	Bus	3	200
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch		
			Private transport		
Bogra	2	6	Bus	2	150
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch		
			Private transport		
Other areas	4	14	Bus	4	
			Launch		
			Both bus and launch		
			Private transport		

Source: Tourist survey at Kuakata, 2001.

Tourists from different areas of Bangladesh visit Kuakata. Foreign tourists also visit Kuakata but they are not so significant in number. Tourists from Dhaka, Barisal and Khulna are frequently found to visit Kuakata. Table 4.6 reveals that the highest number (54%) of tourists are from Dhaka. Tourists who visited Kuakata from Barisal and Khulna were 10% from each city.

Tourists are mostly found to avail bus as the main mode of transport to visit Kuakata. The tourists who visit in groups, use private transport. Only the tourists of Dhaka are found to avail steamers as transport mode to reach to Barisal or Patuakhali to travel Kuakata. Table 4.6 reveals that 7 (44%) tourists from Dhaka availed bus while 9 (56%) tourists availed both bus and steamer (as transport modes) to travel Kuakata.

4.6 Attractions and distractions at Kuakata

At Kuakata, one can enjoy some rare scenes. The sun rises from the sea in the morning and sets in the sea in the evening. The rare view of sun rise and sun set in the sea from the same point is the main attraction of Kuakata. Other attractions include diving and bathing in the Bay of Bengal, walking on the sandy beach along the blue water, watching the beautiful scenery of coconut grove, migratory winter birds in the virgin sanctuary, green pine forest, sailing boats in the sea, fishing in small boats, shell collection, surfing, and visiting the Buddhist temple (the largest statue of the country). Another scenic spot is the *Sundarban Pathrar Ban*, which offers beautiful scenery of the continuous mangrove forest. The *Pathrar Ban* is about 3 km. away from Kuakata towards the West near the river *Andharmanik* (one km. wide at the mouth of the sea). Tourists often visit the *Sundarbans*, 35 km. away from Kuakata. It takes around 4 hours by a trawler and about 2 hours by a speedboat to reach the *Sundarbans Mangrove Forest*. Kuakata is an excellent place for marine fishes. Tourists can have the test of fresh delicious marine fish at Kuakata.



4.7 Tourist facilities and services at Kuakata

There are 21 residential hotels for tourists' accommodation at Kuakata. Most of the hotels have been established between 1997-2000. Tourism in Kuakata is found to get momentum mainly from 1995. There are 6 residential hotels at *Alipur* and 5 in *Mohipur* (just 5 km. away from Kuakata towards the North). *Alipur* and *Mohipur* are prominent fish landing and trading centers in Patuakhali, and Bangladesh too. A number of boats and trawlers from different corners of Bangladesh are moored here every day for fishery business. As there is no landing point at Kuakata, *Alipur* and *Mohipur* have become important and significant fish trading center and fish landing points.

Parjatan Corporation activities at Kuakata

The *Parjatan Holiday Homes* of the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) at Kuakata was established in 1998. The Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh opened the Holiday Home on 14th March, 1998. There are 32 rooms in this home: one Air Conditioned (AC) twin room; 9 non-AC twin rooms; and 12 rooms in ground floor. The students and other domestic tourists mainly use the ground floor rooms. There is a restaurant in this holiday home having 30 seats.

The restaurant is operated, maintained and supervised by BPC in order to ensure quality of service (food, beverage, soft/light drinks etc.). During peak season (October to March) all seats are normally occupied and during dull season (May to September) about 50% seats are found to be occupied by tourists.

There is no bar and heating system for water for bathing and washing (during winter) in this holiday home. Lack of good transportation (wide and smooth road, bridges on the rivers instead of ferry service etc.) and poor communication system (inefficient fax, email, and mobile facilities) are major problems. There is lack of adequate accommodation facilities during peak tourist season. There is lack in fund to extend tourist services. Scarcity of medical facility (there is no M.B. B. S. doctors in Kuakata and its 15-20 km. surroundings) is very acute.

4.8 Transportation at Kuakata

Narrow zigzag roads and presence of a large number of ferries on the way to Kuakata have made the transportation system of Kuakata inconvenient to the tourists and passengers. The impoverished transport system takes much more time to travel. It takes 2/3 hours more to travel between Kuakata and Patuakhali/Barisal. If the bridges were built over the rivers, it would save 2/3 hours. There are 30 buses (12 for Kuakata-Patuakali, 14 for Kuakata-Barisal, 2 for Kuakata-Khulna, and 2 for Kuakata-Dhaka) including 6 BRTC buses in this route. The BRTC buses move to and from Kuakata-Barisal, Kuakata-Khulna, Kuakata-Dhaka (2 for each route). It takes 3/4 hour to reach Patuakhali from Kuakata, 5/7 hours to Barisal, 13/14 hours to Khulna and 18/20 hours to Dhaka. 8 local people are employed in the transport sector (bus service).

4.9 Recreation facility at Kuakata

Recreation facility is barely minimum at Kuakata. The hotels have only the space for accommodation, they even do not have any Television set (in most cases). Some local traders have imported some souvenir items like shell (Zhinuk), shoe, three piece, bed sheet, shirt, lungi, towel, vest, shirt, trousers, dresses, necklace, burmese soap, screen and different toys (in their shops) which tourists can buy for their family and friends.



4.10 Stakeholders' views on tourism at Kuakata

Stakeholders namely tourists; hotel and motel owners, managers and workers; tour operators; traders; transport contractors; local newsmen; and others have different views on tourism at Kuakata. Their common view is that Kuakata is a potential tourist site. Poor transportation is the main problem for the development of Kuakata as a tourist spot. The

socio-economic development of the local fishermen community largely depends on its development as a tourist site. The government, non-government, private agencies, donors and local people should take necessary projects for tourism development at Kuakata.

4.11 Tourists' views on fisherman community

A few tourists visit the fishermen community of Kuakata. Different tourists have different views about the fishermen community. The views are on different aspects like—problems of the community, potentials and suggestion for their sustenance and development, impacts of tourism on the environment. Tourists who closely get involved with the fishermen communities have the general view that the socio-economic and environmental condition of fishermen community of Kuakata is not satisfactory. Steps to be taken from the government, non-government organizations, donor agencies and local bodies for improvement of their existing condition.

4.12 Incorporation of fisheries with tourism

Fisheries and tourism at Kuakata are closely related. Fisheries activities of Kuakata began around 200 years ago, when the Rakhain Community first built up their settlement here. The *Rakhain* Community first started catching fish in the sea. In course of time, the Muslim and Hindu Community started fishing. None can clearly mention the period when the tourists first came to Kuakata to see the sunrise and sunset. The local people mentioned that tourists are found frequently at Kuakata since 1998 and onwards. A few of the fishermen families of Kuakata are found to be involved in plying tourist boats to carry tourists to the surrounding attractions (mainly the forests and natural greenery of Kuakata).

4.13 Environmental implication of tourism at Kuakata

At Kuakata, urban environment is expanding day by day over the natural environment due to tourism. The socio-cultural environment is also changing following the socio-cultural and habits of different type of tourists (foreign and domestic). Natural environment is changing by continuous human interventions. Environmental pollution at Kuakata is mainly due to haphazard and scattered solid waste disposal in the roadside beach area. Unhealthy and unhygienic fish processing activities in fish drying spots on the beach sometimes pollute its surrounding environment. The fishing and fry collection activities within the core areas of the beach disrupt the privacy and serene environment that is desired for the tourists. The Haphazard and unplanned development of hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, small grocery shops, tea stalls, fish and fry depots etc. have created negative impact on the physical environment.



4.14 Comparison of Kuakata with other resort site

Many tourists have compared Kuakata sea beach with other beach areas of Bangladesh, which they previously visited. They mainly compared Kuakata with Cox's Bazar and Patenga sea beach.

Kuakata sea beach is beautiful, full of beautiful natural greenery, calm and quieter than the beach of Cox's Bazar. Kuakata sea beach is small, lonely and beautiful with greenery. Rather the beach of Cox's Bazar is big, crowded, busy and is not calm and quiet, and has poor greenery. Sunrise at Kuakata is more attractive, which is not seen at Cox's Bazar, but the sunset at Cox's Bazar is more attractive than Kuakata. Cox's Bazar is well equipped with modern facilities while Kuakata is still now is an underdeveloped area in terms of modern facilities. Cox's Bazar is the longest sea beach in the world where Kuakata is 8-10 times smaller than the beach of Cox's Bazar. Accommodation and eating facilities are better and more developed at Cox's Bazar than in Kuakata. Tourism facilities at Kuakata are also barely minimum compared to Cox's Bazar. Surf/wave of the sea of Cox's Bazar is higher and more attractive to look at. The roaring sound of the sea of Cox's Bazar is more rhythmic than that of Kuakata. More foreign tourists visit Cox's Bazar than Kuakata. Urban life and urban facilities are present at Cox's Bazar which is not present at Kuakata.

4.15 Problems and potentials for tourism development at Kuakata

A number of problems for tourism development at Kuakata emerged from the study. These problems are pointed below:

Poor Transportation System

Transportation is the main problem for tourism development at Kuakata. The condition of Kuakata-Kalapara-Patuakhali highway is very bad. Though the construction and development works of this road have been going on in a slow pace, the road is not convenient for transportation. The tourists and visitors visiting Kuakata are often at the risk of their lives. The distance between Kalapara and Kuakata is only 22 Km and there are 3 ferries within this short distance. The ferries are also in a bad condition. The landing areas are not high enough, and most of the landing areas go under water during high tide. The road is quite narrow. The bricks of the road are found to be loose, while there are large holes in the road. Due to the poor condition of transportation system, no one wishes to visit Kuakata again. Not only this, a person having a bad experience of visiting Kuakata, often advocates his relatives, friends and familiar persons (based on his own experience) not to visit Kuakata. Establishment of new ferries and pontoons along with gangways over the rivers is therefore very urgent.



Inadequate Exposure and lack of Development of Surrounding Attractions

There are many attractions such as *Gangamotir Forest*, *Pathrara Forest*, Misripara Buddhist Statue, Rakhain Palli (Village), Shutki Palli (Village) etc. in the surrounding areas of Kuakata. These attractions have not yet been exposed and developed for tourism. For this reason, most of the tourists leave Kuakata just after enjoying the sunrise and sunset. According to the local people, there are options to create more attraction points for tourists at Kuakata. Local Rakhain cultural functions can be made available for the tourists. Steps to be taken in this regard.

Inadequate Recreation Facilities

There is lack of recreational facilities such as seating and gossiping points, chairs and benches with electric lights, picnic spots, provisions for regular cultural functions etc. at Kuakata. Recreation facilities should be provided by placing more chairs and benches along with electric lights at different places of the coconut garden (owned by the Farms and Farms Co. Ltd.). Cultural festivals may be arranged by the local artists at the hall room of Rakhain Cultural Academy during evening.



Inadequate Security Measures

Security measure is not found to be satisfactory at Kuakata. A few unexpected events like disturbance by drug addicted young boys are found now and then. It can be stopped taking appropriate measures. The night guards of the police force and concerned defense forces should be increased to ensure more security at Kuakata, especially near the beach area. More security should be ensured for the devotees who come here during the *Rash Festival*.

Lack of Control of Hotel Rent and Food Price in Restaurants

There is no control over the price of foods, beverage, souvenirs etc. in the restaurants and souvenir shops of Kuakata. The owners of restaurants and souvenir shops sell their products at different (much higher) prices to maximize profits. The tourists and visitors are sometimes unnecessarily harassed by such uncontrolled price fluctuations. The local people, tourists and visitors, all are being indirectly affected by this practice. The tourists feel insecure and uncomfortable to buy the commodities and avail the services. The goodwill of Kuakata is at stake. Tourists generally do not wish to buy more commodities and souvenirs from Kuakata. It can have a negative impact on tourism development.

Other Problems:

- Ø Tourist area of Kuakata has not yet been delineated and declared. The local people and outside investors are building different structures in an unplanned way within the areas to be acquired and declared later as tourism spots or

Parjatan area. The owners of these structures may face difficulties later to relocate or dismantle these structures in a very short notice. The investors and people will be badly affected due to this problem.

- Ø There is no hygienic and modern fish processing industry in and around Kuakata.
- Ø Land value of Kuakata is increasing day by day with the increase of tourism development activities. The outside investors are showing keen interest to invest here in tourism activities. They are investing to develop hotels, motels, restaurants, souvenir shops, department stores, markets, etc. at Kuakata. Under these circumstances, a number of greedy brokers/middlemen are involved in irregularities in selling land to the outsiders. The outside investors are found to fall in their trap of faulty transactions while buying lands. Incompatibility in price, fraudulence and irregularities in deeds etc. are common, which the outside investors have to face. In most cases the outsiders can not buy lands at real market price.
- Ø At times, there existed terrorism and violence at Kuakata. The tourists, mainly the female ones, feel insecured at Kuakata due to such incidents.
- Ø In Kuakata there is no administrative set up like Upazila Headquarters. The people of Kukata have to go to Kalapara for their administrative functions traveling a long distance. Kuakata does not remain busy for all the months of the year due to absence of such administrative facility. Kuakata only remains busy during the tourist and fishing season. It hinders the development of Kuakata.
- Ø The fishermen fix anchors on the beach, mainly in areas where tourists stay and move frequently. The tourists feel disturbed and sometimes accidents occur with the anchors.
- Ø There are fish drying spots within the beach areas where tourists are found to walk (in the beach) while enjoying the sunrise, sunset and the sea. The bad smell, which comes from fish drying, irritates the tourists.
- Ø A few local people are sometimes found to excavate the beach and take away sands for construction activities. It reduces the beauty of the beach and enhances beach erosion.
- Ø There is a sub station for telephone exchange at Kuakata. It is frequently found to out of order. Mobile telephone, e-mail and internet facilities have not yet reached Kuakata. The tourists are often unable to inform their families, relatives and offices about their arrival and departure while staying at Kuakata.
- Ø Load shedding of electricity for about 3-6 hours per day is a common phenomenon at Kuakata. It brings inconvenience for the tourists and others.
- Ø There exists a great variation in the rate of accommodation fees of the *Zilla Parishad Dakbangalow* and rest houses of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for the government and non-government employees. The rate is much higher for the non-government employees. It discourages the non-government employees to tour Kuakata due to higher rate of accommodation fees.
- Ø Buses, trucks, pickups, vans, micro buses, private cars and vans (used for transportation of tourists, passengers and goods) are found to stand on the embankment and highways. It creates difficulty for movement of tourists and local people. It also odd looking. The places where the vehicles are kept become dirty, muddy and unhygienic.
- Ø There is no eco-park at different points along the beach towards both the east and west direction of Kuakata. The tourists fail to enjoy such recreation facilities while walking along the beach.
- Ø There is no watchtower in the forest areas adjacent to Kuakata. The tourists can not enjoy the natural scenery of the vast sea and green vegetation of the forest along with human habitations.
- Ø There are 3-4 seating benches at the central point of the beach established by a private vendor. It does not fulfill the requirement of a large number of tourists during the peak tourism season. No seating arrangement has been provided here by government initiatives and Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (at certain intervals), so that the tourists can take rest while walking along the beach.
- Ø There is inadequate number of picnic spots (with all facilities such as furnace, firewood, water supply, guide and helpers) at Kuakata. There are few spots in the coconut and teak garden adjacent to Kuakata, but these are not well facilitated and carefully preserved.
- Ø There is lack of modern steamer and speed boat service at Kuakata for tourists to make a journey in the sea and enjoy the attractive forest (named *Gangamotir Forest* and *Fatrar Forest*) located to the east-west direction from the main beach of Kuakata.
- Ø There are no floating pontoons in the sea near Kuakata for water transportation facility between Kuakata and different areas of the country.

Potentials for Tourism Development at Kuakata

There are numerous potentials/prospects for Kuakata to develop this site as a tourist spot. The present and future prospects mention by the interviewees are listed below:

Present potentials:

The rare scene of sunrise and sunset
The largest Buddhist Statue in the sub-continent
Attractive, clam and quiet beach
Natural greenery along the beach
Pine Forest
Gangamotir Forest

Fatrar Forest
Rash Festival
Rakhain Palli/Village
Shutki Palli/Village
Rakhain Culture
Fishermen communities
Fishing activities

Future potentials:

Developing an EPZ
Burmese handicrafts center
Eco-park
Watchtower



4.16 Recommendations for tourism development of Kuakata

Recommendations for tourism development at Kuakata as emerged from the study

- Ø Tourist area of Kuakata to be delineated and declared. The local people and outside investors are building different structures in an unplanned way in this area (to be acquired and declared as tourism area). The area to be delineated as tourist spot and land uses to be permitted within the areas should be made public so that the investors and developers can work in a planned way.
- Ø A number of fish processing industries can be set up in and around Kuakata. Already Kuakata has been unofficially declared as an Export Processing Zone (EPZ). The fishermen community will be benefited if there exists modern fish processing facilities at Kuakata. Transportation, communication and physical infrastructures to be developed to support the EPZ (which will also be complementary for tourism development at Kuakata).
- Ø Land value in Kuakata is increasing day by day with the increase of tourism development activities. The outside investors are showing keen interest to invest here in tourism development activities. They are planning to invest in developing hotels, motels, restaurants, hospitals, clinics, souvenir shops, departmental stores, markets, etc. at Kuakata. Under this circumstances, a number of greedy brokers are involved in irregularities of selling land to the outsiders. The outside investors are found to fall in a faulty position while buying lands. Incompatibility in price, fraudulence and irregularities in deeds etc. are the complexities, which the outside investors have to face. Steps to be

taken by local administration to stop such irregularities so that they can buy lands at real market price without facing any problem.

- Ø Steps to be taken against the terrorists and their violent activities at Kuakata. The tourists, mainly the female ones feel insecured at Kuakata due to this.
- Ø Kuakata should be declared as an Upazila Headquarters and steps to be taken to foster the development of such administrative setting. The local people will get all the administrative facilities from the New Upazila Headquarters at Kuakata. Time and money of the poor people would thus be saved. Subsequently, Kuakata would be busy for all the year round for administrative, tourism and fisheries related activities.
- Ø Fixing anchors on the beach (mainly in the beach areas where tourists stay and move frequently) should be prohibited. The tourists thus will not be disturbed and occurrence of accidents (with the anchors) will be reduced.
- Ø The fish drying spots are to be prohibited from the central beach areas where tourists are found to walk along the beach while enjoying the sunrise, sunset, waves and the sea.
- Ø A few local people are sometimes found to excavate the beach and take sands for construction activities. It reduces the beauty of beach and enhances the beach erosion too. So, steps should be taken to stop this practice to preserve the beach and restore the beauty of the beach.
- Ø A *Parjatan Village* can be established near the EPZ areas.
- Ø Burmese handicrafts (i.e. *Lungi*, Wrapper, shirts, cloths etc.) made by handlooms should be produced at large volumes for sale at the newly constructed *Rakhain* market at Kuakata.
- Ø More security to be ensured for the devotees who come during the *Rash Purnima (Ras festival)*.
- Ø Local people should be involved with the *Radhakrishna Sebasram* at Kuakata for its development.
- Ø Local *Rakhain* cultural affairs and functions can be made more attractive to the tourists. Steps to be taken in this regard. The local artists can arrange cultural festivals during evening.
- Ø Recreation facilities to be provided by placing more chairs and benches with electric light post at different places of the coconut garden owned by the Farms and Farms Co. Ltd.
- Ø Unexpected events like disturbance by drug addicted young boys should be stopped taking appropriate security measures. The night guard of the police and concerned defense forces to be increased to ensure more security at Kuakata, especially near the beach area.
- Ø Committees to be formed by the local people, civil society, hotel-restaurant owners and concerned management persons to bring a control over the market price of the commodities and services. The local people, tourists and visitors, all will mutually benefit from such coordinated efforts. The tourists would feel secured and comfortable to buy commodities at market price and avail the services. By controlling the market price, thus will attract more tourists to visit Kuakata, stay for a few days and to buy more commodities and souvenirs. It would have positive effects on tourism development.
- Ø No unplanned construction and development to be permitted in areas declared and delineated for tourism development.
- Ø There is a sub station telephone exchange at Kuakata. It is frequently found to be out of order. Mobile telephone, e-mail and internet facilities etc. have not yet reached Kuakata. So the tourists are often unable to communicate with their families, relatives and offices. A full-fledged telephone and telegraph station along with the provision of modern communication facilities like mobile telephone, e-mail, internet etc. can be established at Kuakata.
- Ø An electricity or power transmission station to be established at Kuakata to minimize electricity load shedding which prevails at Kuakata. A mini power station can also be established at Kuakata to produce power to supply and support this resort area.
- Ø There exists a great variation in accommodation fees of the *Zilla Parishad Dakbangalow* and the rest houses of the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for the government and non-government employees. The rate is much higher for the non-government employees. It discourages the non-government employees to visit Kuakata due to higher rate of accommodation fees for them. Steps to be taken to make an equitable rate for both for the government and non-government employees. It will encourage the non-government employees to tour Kuakata. It would be a positive factor towards promotion of tourism at Kuakata.
- Ø Buses, trucks, pickup vans, micro buses, private cars and rickshaw vans (used for transportation of tourists, passengers and goods) are found to stand on the embankment and highways at Kuakata. It creates difficulties for the movement of tourists and local people. The places where the vehicles are kept aside become dirty, muddy and unhygienic. To solve these problems a separate well-facilitated bus stand should be established at Kuakata.
- Ø A number of eco-parks with different facilities to be established at different points along the beach towards the east and west direction of Kuakata. The tourists would visit the parks while walking along the beach. The parks would attract the tourists.
- Ø A number of watchtowers can be established in the forest areas adjacent to Kuakata. The tourists would see the natural scenery of the vast sea and green vegetation of the forest along with human habitats.
- Ø A number of seating benches to be established along the beach at certain intervals so that the tourists can take rest while long distance walking along the beach.
- Ø More picnic spots to be created with all facilities (such as furnace, firewood, water supply, guide and helpers) in the coconut and teak garden adjacent to Kuakata.

- Ø Modern steamer and speed boat service to be established at Kuakata for the tourists to make journey in the sea and enjoy the attractive forest (named *Gangamotir Forest* and *Fatrar Forest*) located at the east-west direction from the main beach of Kuakata.
- Ø Floating pontoons can be established in the sea near Kuakata to develop and promote the water transportation facilities between Kuakata and different areas of the country.

4.17. Conclusion

Kuakata is a potential tourist site of Bangladesh. Tourism at Kuakata is seasonal. The tourist season normally starts in October and continues up to April. The rare scene of sunrise, sunset, colourful Rakhain communities, largest Buddhist Statue in the sub-continent, fantastic beach are the key attractions for both the domestic and foreign tourists. Ras festival, which is very significant to the Hindu devotees and normally held in the month of November, is another attraction for the tourists. Tourist gathering is seen highest in the month of November due to this Ras festival. Being majority of the people of Bangladesh Muslim, they normally do not visit Kuakata during the month of Ramadan, and so tourists are found minimum at Kuakata in the month of Ramadan. Poor transportation; inadequate exposure of all the tourist attractions; inadequacy of recreation facilities and security measures; lack of control of hotel rent, food prices in restaurants and prices of souvenir items; unplanned urban development; absence of modern medical facilities; lack of care and maintenance to protect beach erosion and its environment; inadequate communication and electricity facilities; inadequacy of modern and convenient lodging and eating facilities; etc. are the limitations and barriers of tourism development at Kuakata. Socio-economic development of the local community people (fishermen, farmers and others) will happen if the area is developed fully for tourism. Tourism development of Kuakata is in gradual progress over the years. Government can earn a lot of revenue from tourism at Kuakata. The government, donors and private agencies should take necessary steps for tourism development at Kuakata.

