Sojourns in the Sundarbans

An Exploratory Study of Community-based River Tourism between India and Bangladesh
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Published By
CUTS International
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Email: cuts@cuts.org, Web site: www.cuts-international.org

With the support of
The World Bank Group

In partnership with
Unnayan Shamannay

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Citation: CUTS (2019), Sojourns in the Sundarbans: An Exploratory Study of Community-based River Tourism between India and Bangladesh

Printed in India by M S Printer, Jaipur


This document is an output of a project entitled, 'Integrating Community-based Tourism along the India-Bangladesh Protocol Route for Inland Navigation'.

This publication is made possible with the support of the World Bank Group. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are that of CUTS International and Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh and not those of the World Bank Group.

#1905, Suggested Contribution ₹250/US$25
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<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domini</td>
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<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Air Conditioner</td>
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<td>ASI</td>
<td>Archaeological Survey of India</td>
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<td>BC</td>
<td>Before Christ</td>
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<td>BEDS</td>
<td>Bangladesh Environment and Development Society</td>
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<td>BIWTA</td>
<td>Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>E-rickshaw</td>
<td>Electronic rickshaw</td>
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<td>Feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>IWAI</td>
<td>Inland Waterways Authority of India</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>PIWTT</td>
<td>Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade</td>
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<td>SANDEE</td>
<td>South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics</td>
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<td>SAWI</td>
<td>South Asia Water Initiative</td>
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<td>SIZ</td>
<td>Sundarbans Impact Zone</td>
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<td>SOP</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedure</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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Acknowledgements

This research study is a result of untiring and sincere efforts put in by a team of individuals. A large number of stakeholders were interviewed for this purpose, and we acknowledge with thanks the support we have received from them. We acknowledge the valuable contributions made by stakeholders, particularly the boatmen and providers of other allied services of the Sundarbans region of India and Bangladesh. Without their help, the information used to compile this report could not have been gathered.

We are thankful to the World Bank Group for supporting this study and also for providing their valuable guidance in making the content of the study sharper. We express our sincere gratitude to Tapas Paul, Lead Environment Specialist of the India Office of the World Bank Group in this regard.

We are also grateful to our strategic partner – Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh who conducted the survey in the Bangladesh part of the Sundarbans.

We thank our colleagues at CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre who contributed to this project. The study was conducted in monsoon, and at times the study team had to face many challenges in reaching the spots chosen for the survey. Our special thanks go to Prithviraj Nath, Indranil Bose, Sumanta Biswas, Debolina Mukherjee, Sayantan Sengupta, Sayandeep Chattopadhyay, Rupomoy Bhattacharya and Bijaya Roy for carrying out the survey and preparing this report.

We are thankful to Aparajita Gupta for editing, Madhuri Vasnani for proofreading and Rajkumar Trivedi for preparing the layout.

There are many others who have enriched us with their contributions. We thank all of them for their support. Finally, any error that may have remained is solely ours.

Project Team
CUTS International
Preface

Spanning across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India, the Sundarbans – literally translated as ‘the beautiful forest’ in Bengali – is the world’s largest mangrove forest. The habitat supports a incredible variety of aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species and has been designated as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

The entire region is home to some of the most impoverished human populations in the world. These people depend mostly on low yielding agriculture, fishery, honey and wax collection for their livelihood and wage a relentless battle against nature for their survival. Identification of alternative and supplementary sources of livelihood can go a long way in bailing out these people from the clutches of poverty that define their existence.

The geographical topography of the Sundarbans is well suited to river-based tourism in the region. Apart from its diverse flora and fauna, the area has been inhabited by settlers from various parts of India and Bangladesh over the years, resulting in a melting pot of diverse cultures and religions. Endowed with such attractions, both natural and human-made, the appeal of the Sundarbans as a tourist haven, can hardly be exaggerated.

South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI): Sundarbans Focus Area Programme of the World Bank Group seeks to promote joint management of the Sundarbans by the governments of India and Bangladesh for sustainable development of the region. Community-based river cruise tourism between the two countries is a crucial component of this project.

Under this programme, the India Office of World Bank Group has involved CUTS in the preparation of a conceptual plan for community-based river cruise tourism from India to Bangladesh via the Sundarbans. The plan is based on a primary survey and seeks to indicate the different routes that connect the Sundarbans across the border along with places of interest. The framework also seeks to capture relevant details of infrastructure, security and other regulatory issues along the routes. This plan also offers recommendations regarding interventions that may be required to make the initiative successful.
A well developed and sustainable plan for community-based river cruise tourism is a source of hope for the impoverished populations of the Sundarbans on both sides of the border. This may well reduce the reliance of the local communities on forest resources, which has been a major causal factor behind the bio-degradation in the Sundarbans.

One can, in this regard, draw inspiration from the successful model of the Bojo -Aloguinsan project near Cebu, Philippines, where the association of the service providers is run by the local fishermen and housewives. Apart from facilitating river cruise, these people deliver occasional lectures on ecology, conservation, mangroves and birds and also market handicrafts made by the locals. It has provided an alternative livelihood to the locals and has considerably boosted the local economy.

For us at CUTS, working on this project has been a pleasure. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the World Bank for taking this initiative and providing support. I also thank Unnayan Shamannay, our Bangladesh partner for their support and contribution towards the success of this project. Finally, I thank my colleagues who have executed the project on the ground.

We look forward to making further contributions to the future policy discourse on this subject.
Executive Summary

Background

Covering an area of almost 10,000 square km across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal, the Sundarbans is a vast tract of forest and saltwater swamp in the lower part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra and Meghna river deltas.

The delta extending across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India is also the largest mangrove forest in the world supporting diverse habitats for various aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species.

The entire mangrove region of both India and Bangladesh is densely populated harbouring some of the most impoverished populations in the world mainly dependent on low yielding agriculture, fishery, honey and wax collection.

It is believed that adequately regulated tourism can provide alternate livelihood opportunities to the local population and act as a tool for regional development. Thus there is a need for development of sustainable tourism in the Sundarbans area.

Rationale

Given this backdrop, CUTS International with support from the World Bank has conducted a study entitled Integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation.

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and near the Sundarbans, has the potential to not only popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations, but also to identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can help capture the ecological, cultural and historical uniqueness of the Sundarbans.

Apart from the existing flora and fauna of the mangrove forest, pilgrimage and heritage sites, local cultural events including fairs, festivals and many other traditional practices of the local communities of Sundarbans can hold popular attractions for tourists.

Appropriate promotion of community-based river cruise tourism can generate new and sustainable livelihoods for local inhabitants, a majority of whom belong to the poor and marginalised sections of the society.

Additionally, it may help preserve the delicate ecological balance of this biosphere through global attention, exposure, involvement and promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism. This will further encourage governments on both sides of the border to frame policies appropriate to sustainable use and preservation of the Sundarbans biospheres.
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The objectives of the study were to:

- identify the possible and most feasible routes connecting Sundarbans on both sides of the border.
- pinpoint the locations of interest for tourism along and near the identified routes with the specification of all such places, seasons, activities, festivals, etc. that may be of interest to tourists.
- identify and documenting existing and required infrastructure at such potential locations for tourism development, with emphasis on community-based tourism.
- identify opportunities and challenges for the operation of river cruises along the identified routes.
- understand the impact of river cruise tourism on the political economy at the local level, including developing local livelihood opportunities linked to such tourism along the identified routes.
- recommend necessary and desired policy interventions.

The key routes examined in this study are:

- Route A: India-Bangladesh protocol route
- Route B: Alternate existing route in Bangladesh: Dhaka-Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata
- Route C: Existing alternative route 1 in India: Kolkata-Godkhali-Hemnagar-Angthihara-Mongla-Dhaka
- Route D: Existing Alternative route 2 in India: Kolkata-Jharkhali-Hemnagar-Angthihara-Mongla-Dhaka
- Route E: Alternative route in Kolkata: Kolkata-Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Angthihara-Mongla-Dhaka

The key findings are:

1) **Tourism Infrastructure in India and Bangladesh**

- The infrastructure needs to be developed on both sides.
- The boat cruises are often privately operated and do not follow government-mandated regulations or standards in terms of safety norms and hygiene conditions.
- There is a lack of holistic government regulations to monitor services provided by the local boat cruises.
- At several places especially in Bangladesh, permanent ghats are absent for disembarkation of tourists.
- Intermittent supply of electricity and mobile connectivity at several places need to be addressed by governments of India and Bangladesh.
- In Bangladesh, the cruise covers more time and distance on the river as compared to the Indian side. Hence, accommodations and meals have to be arranged on the cruise vessel.
Recommendations

- Capacity building and financial assistance to the local communities to develop eco-friendly accommodations.
- Assistance to the local boatmen to improve infrastructure and safety measures in the local boats.
- Regulation of activities of the boat associations in the Sundarbans on both sides of the border.
- Increasing the quantity of restrooms and waste disposal facilities along the way and near the tourist spots.
- The governments must integrate local development plans to provide uninterrupted supply of electricity in the Sundarbans area.
- More permanent ghats and jetties need to be developed for ease of movement of the tourists who are not accustomed to makeshift infrastructure.

2) Tourism Orientation of the Local Communities

There is a considerable lack of tourism orientation among the local communities on both sides of the border. Communication skills and service quality of the local population must be strengthened keeping in mind the diverse clientele to be catered to, particularly international tourists.

Recommendations

- Proper training and capacity building of the local boatmen such that they can cater to international clientele.
- Capacity building and vocational training of local communities involved in hotels and restaurants can help address the needs of international tourists.

3) Operation of the Tourist Cruises

- There is a lack of adequate depth along several stretches of the Sundarbans rivers, which affects the navigability of vessels.
- There is only one immigration checkpoint at Hemnagar, which serves both cargo and passenger vehicles.
- Piracy through boat-borne anti-social elements remains a problem along some stretches of the Sundarbans rivers and security needs to be strengthened.

Recommendations

- The government on both sides needs to identify stretches along the Sundarbans rivers, which lack the least available depth and undertake regular dredging and desilting to maintain navigability of the channels.
• Additionally, to facilitate international cruise tourism, IWAI and BIWTA need to chalk out additional routes and disembarkation points based on anchoring facility and proximity of places of tourist attraction. New routes may also reduce the pressure on the existing routes.

• There needs to be separate immigration posts for passenger and cargo vehicles.

• Joint training for the guides of both countries. This can be done by the forest departments of the two countries along with NGOs. It would facilitate the exchange of relevant knowledge and best practices.

• Cooperation in the domain of boat designing by bringing in boat designers and manufacturers of both the countries for a knowledge exchange programme.

• The Bhomra-Gojadanga land post can be improved to accommodate tourists who may be interested in transiting through land ports.

• Deployment of more floating police units is required to address the sporadic issues of piracy and theft along the concerned routes.

4) Environmental Impact

• There is an apprehension among the forest department officials that cruise tourism may negatively impact the ecology of the Sundarbans given its sensitive ecosystem.

• Usage of contaminated chemical fuel by local boats and their disposal in the water causes serious damage to the ecosystem of the Sundarbans.

• Solid waste management on the vessels is also a critical issue since the boatmen, and even the tourists have a tendency to dispose off solid wastes into the rivers of the Sundarbans.

Recommendations

• Capacity building of locals can help develop eco-tourism models including environmentally sustainable home-stays, restaurants and village tours. Coupled with the river cruise, these can engender more sustainable livelihood opportunities in the area with minimal damage to the environment.

• Capacity building of boatmen could equip them to observe improved mandates of fuel and waste management.

• The cruise crew and management should also adopt international operation standards to minimise damage to the Sundarbans ecosystem.
1. Background

SAWI Sundarbans Focus Area Programme

Covering an area of almost 10,000 square kms across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal, the Sundarbans is a vast tract of forest and saltwater swamp in the lower part of the Ganga-Brahmaputra and Meghna river deltas.1 The delta extending across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India is also the largest mangrove forest in the world and home to various aquatic, terrestrial and amphibian species, including 260 species of birds and some globally endangered species including the estuarine crocodile, the Ganges and Irrawaddy dolphins and the Indian Python. Moreover, it is the only mangrove habitat in the world for the *Panthera tigris* (Royal Bengal Tiger). Given its geographical uniqueness, the region has been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

Writing about the Sundarbans, Amitav Ghosh in his popular fiction ‘The Hungry Tide’ observes, “There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear under water only to re-emerge hours later. …When the tides create new land, overnight mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions are right they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within a few short years.”

The entire mangrove region covering both India and Bangladesh harbour some of the most impoverished communities in the world. The Indian Sundarbans, comprising 40 per cent of the total Sundarbans region, consists of about 102 islands, of which almost 54 are populated by about 4 million people.2 On the Bangladesh side, according to the 2011 Bangladesh Census, the Sundarbans Impact Zone (SIZ) has a population of 7.8 million.3 A considerable section of this population works as agricultural labourers. Agriculture, unfortunately, is not high yielding due to pronounced salinity of soil and water. Other major sources of livelihood include fishery, honey and wax collection. In this context, it is evident that tourism can provide alternative livelihood opportunities to the local communities and act as a tool for regional development. However, if tourism is not regulated, it may inflict irreparable damage on the biodiversity of the region. There is, thus, a need for the development of sustainable tourism in the Sundarbans.

The South Asia Water Initiative (SAWI) Sundarbans Focus Area Programme seeks to promote joint management of the Sundarbans by the governments of both India and Bangladesh for sustainable development of the region. The two specific goals of this endeavour are to enhance:

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2 Livelihoods today and tomorrow, *E-course.* http://livelihoods.net.in/e-course/sundarbans

3 Mondal Haque, Sanaul (2017), “Population and Land Cover Dynamics of Sundarbans Impact Zone in Bangladesh.” East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
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(i) bilateral cooperation to implement the agreements between India and Bangladesh on the Sundarbans; (ii) technical cooperation between India and Bangladesh for joint water resources management in the Sundarbans.

Potential of Developing River Cruise Tourism between India and Bangladesh

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and around the Sundarbans, aspires not only to popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations in this part of the world, but also to identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can help capture the ecological, cultural and historical uniqueness of the Sundarbans. There has been intermittent interest among domestic and foreign tourists to explore this nonpareil land of mangroves, tigers, estuarine crocodiles and Olive Ridley turtles. A comprehensive plan based on a detailed study of prospects for tourism can promote the Sundarbans as a destination for tourists from around the world.

The lure of the exquisite flora and fauna of the mangrove forests apart; pilgrimage and heritage sites, local cultural events including fairs, festivals and other traditional practices of the local communities of Sundarbans can also draw tourists from near and far. *Bono Bibi Puja*, traditional worship revered by both the Muslim and the Hindu communities of the delta to protect them from the attacks of tigers, bears testimony to the harmony prevailing amongst the two major communities in this region.

Promotion of community-based river cruise tourism also has the potential for generation of new and sustainable livelihoods for local inhabitants, a majority of whom are poor and marginalised. The dearth of employment opportunities results in widespread migration of the male population, to other parts of the state and nation leaving the women to manage households, agriculture and other small-time economic engagements like fishing. Tourism with appropriate capacity enhancement can fill this lacuna and also help promote local cuisines, art and culture, with the promise of good economic returns. Promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism in the Sundarbans will not only showcase the uniqueness of the mangroves but also help preserve the delicate ecological balance of this biosphere through global attention, exposure and involvement. This will encourage governments on both sides of the border to frame policies appropriate to sustainable use and preservation of the Sundarbans ecosystem.

In this backdrop, CUTS with support from the World Bank has conducted the study entitled ‘*Integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation*’.
Status of Legal Framework

The Protocol on Inland Water Trade and Transit (PIWTT) has been operational since 1972. In June 2015, the protocol on inland water transit between India and Bangladesh was signed. The 2015 protocol specified the ‘Ports of Calls’ in India (i.e. Kolkata, Haldia, Karimganj, Pandu, Shilghat) and Bangladesh (Narayanganj, Khulna, Mongla, Sirajganj, Ashuganj).

The protocol also specified the following routes for inland water transit:


In April 2017, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Bangladesh on passenger and cruise services on the coastal and protocol routes was also signed.

The MoU specified that the passengers and tourists, after completion of the customs and immigration facilities will be allowed to embark and disembark at identified coastal and inland ports in India and Bangladesh. These ports are set to be decided mutually by the Joint Shipping Committee on Coastal Shipping or the Joint Standing Committee on PIWTT.

Since the signing of the protocol in 2015, India and Bangladesh have also signed an addendum in October, 2018 to the protocol including additional routes.

This addendum enabled the addition of an additional route through ‘Pangaon’ in the Bangladesh part and through ‘Dhubri’ in the Indian part on the original 8 routes. Pangaon and Dhubri were also declared to be treated as ‘Ports of Calls’ through this addendum.

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4 More details of the Protocol on June 2015 is available at: https://www.mea.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?id=2421
5 More details of the MoU on April 2017 is available at: https://www.mea.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?id=3033
6 More details of the Addendum on October 2018 is available at: https://www.mea.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?id=3445
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The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to the 2017 MoU on passenger and cruise services on the coastal and protocol route between India and Bangladesh was formalized on October 2018.7

The SOP was designed to promote and facilitate the day to day passenger and cruise services and operations of the vessels plying between the two countries across the 8 routes as revised in the Addendum of 2018.

Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

• Identify and study the possible and most feasible route (likely to be the already identified Kolkata – Haldia – Raimongal – Mongla – Kawkhali – Barisal – Hizla – Chandpur – Narayanganj route) along the India-Bangladesh waterways;

• Identify locations of interest (in terms of ecological, cultural, historical, adventure, religious and nostalgic8 factors) for tourism along and near this identified route. This will include specification of all such places, seasons, activities, festivals, etc. that may interest tourists;

• Identify and document existing and required infrastructure at such potential locations for tourism development, with emphasis on community-based tourism;

• Look at policies and regulations that govern navigability along the route and understand necessary changes;

• Identify opportunities and challenges for operating river cruises along the identified routes. This will include issues like navigability (to be ascertained through available government data and interaction with local knowledge resources particularly boatmen and sareng9, embarkation points and their existing infrastructure, links from river-side to places of interest nearby;

• Briefly understand the impact of river cruise tourism on political-economy factors at the local level, including developing local livelihood opportunities linked to such tourism along the identified route;

• Prepare a conceptual plan of the possible tourist circuits possible (with emphasis on night-stay among the communities) using a combination of several themes for each circuit;

• Recommend additional studies that will be required either before any public investment or after extending the proposal to the private sector for attracting investment.

7 More details of the SoP on October 2018 is available at: https://www.mea.gov.in/TreatyDetail.htm?3446

8 People residing in West Bengal, India and Bangladesh share a common history because this region comprised the undivided province of Bengal prior to partition by British Colonialists in 1905, a segregation that was reinforced in 1947 when India and Pakistan were partitioned

9 A Sareng is the main boatman of the vessel. He also acts as an informal guide of the locale, listening to bush sounds and hoarding the vessel safely to destination. The word originates from the Indo-Aryan language, namely Bangla
Methodology

The project has been implemented through a combination of desk and field research with various aims:

- identifying locations of interest along and near the proposed Indo-Bangla protocol route;
- generating and/or strengthening available information about the identified locations;
- highlighting existing and required infrastructure for tourism promotion; and
- gathering preliminary information and evidence on local socio-economic factors that may be impacted by such tourism.

The desk research has been undertaken on the basis of available secondary literature pertaining to the existing tourism routes, information available on existing infrastructure and the policies and regulations that govern tourism in and around the Sundarbans. A list of such locations/festivals/cultural events preliminarily identified is attached as an annexure (Annex-1) to this report.

CUTS had partnered with the organisation – Unnayan Shamannay from Bangladesh as a strategic partner to complement this study on the Bangladesh side. The Unnayan Shamannay team has worked on this assignment with support and guidance from the CUTS team.

Key informant interviews were conducted by CUTS and Unnayan Shamannay to substantiate secondary and available information. This primarily involved interviews with government officials, people’s representatives, experts and known champions of the Sundarbans. The idea was to validate secondary information and also identify new locations with potential for tourism.

Comprehensive fieldwork has been undertaken to gauge the feasibility and potential of developing community-based river cruise tourism along the Indo-Bangla protocol route through the Sundarbans. This involved multi-stakeholder perception analysis through a structured questionnaire survey of stakeholders including government officials, entrepreneurs, people’s representatives, opinion leaders, subject experts, civil society organisations and media. Key informant interviews of relevant stakeholders also helped to understand the possible impact of tourism development on the generation of livelihood opportunities at the local level.

Focused interviews with stakeholders were also undertaken to understand experts’ opinions and people’s perceptions about how tourism can impact the local biosphere and its flora and fauna.

Challenges

CUTS and Unnayan Shamannay teams faced certain challenges in undertaking this study given the difficult terrain and remoteness of major parts of the study location. Following are the challenges that delayed the process of gathering of primary evidence:

Geographical: Some of the locations in both India and Bangladesh, particularly those nearer to the estuaries of the rivers on both sides of the border, can only be accessed during winter months given the high tidal waves that are encountered from mid-March onwards. This includes locations like Bonnie Camp and Kalas Camp on the Indian side and Dublar Char, Pokkhir Char, etc. on the Bangladesh side. The other way to reach these places is by hiring bigger vessels that can negotiate heavy tides, but even then, docking of the vessel is difficult. Establishments on both sides of the border advise against travelling to these locations during certain periods (mid-March to end-August or mid-September) and are reluctant to issue the necessary permission. This is
mainly in view of the unpredictable nature of the rivers and tides during nor’ westers\textsuperscript{10} and monsoons. As such the survey team was not able to visit these locations and the information and evidence about these locations are based on inputs received from local tour and cruise operators.

\textbf{Political:} Panchayat elections in West Bengal, India were declared on March 31, 2018. The elections were conducted on May 14 and the results were declared on May 17, 2018. Given the incidents of violence as reported in popular media across the state in the build-up to the elections, undertaking the field research was difficult. First, because block and panchayat level officials did not have time to meet CUTS till the elections were over; second, because other relevant local entities and respondents (local people’s representatives, opinion leaders, knowledgeable persons, etc.) were directly or indirectly engaged in the election process. This delayed the overall work in all the identified blocks of West Bengal by around 45-50 days.

\textsuperscript{10} Nor’ westers (Kal Baisakhi) is a local rainfall accompanied by thunder storm which occurs in India and Bangladesh from March till monsoon establishes over Northeast India.

The ancient history of Sundarbans can be traced from various archaeological evidence including artefacts, scriptures and maps. However, studies highlight that due to the ever-changing landscape, physiography and dense population, old relics have not always survived. Under the circumstances, very few scientific investigations have been carried out. Following is a brief outline of the history of human settlements in the region along with a history of efforts at conservation of the region. It also briefly describe the major places of attraction in the region.

Brief History of Human Settlement in the Sundarbans

*Early to middle ages:* Around 500 antiquities discovered in the course of explorations by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of West Bengal, in Govardhanpur and its adjacent Uttar Surendraganj (located near the mouth of the Ganga in the interiors of the Sundarbans in South 24 Parganas district) suggest that this area was inhabited since early ages. The artefacts found indicate the following periods:

- Mauryan era - 4th to 2nd Century BC
- Pala era – 750 to 1200 AD
- Indo Turkish Islamic rule: 1204 to 1575 AD
- Mughal rule: After 1575 AD

*British colonial period:* Recent human settlements in the area date back to 1757 when a treaty was signed between Mir Jafar, the then Nawab of Bengal, and British East India Company, through which lands of undivided 24 Parganas were ceded to the East India Company. The present settlements specifically originated in 1771 when the forest land was divided into plots to be leased out to prospective landlords.

*Post-independence:* After independence, between 1951 and 1971, the area witnessed a huge influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The region also witnessed an influx of tribal populations from central India who were lured by the upper caste Hindu leaseholders keen on clearing their forest lands. Poor people from the coastal districts of both India and Bangladesh also migrated to this region.

The continuous influx of people from various parts of the world and India rendered Sundarbans a melting pot of cultures. Since living in Sundarbans was fraught with challenges including animal attacks and frequent cyclones, the culture and literature of the region were also influenced by

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the relentless struggle between man and nature. The unique folk religion of a number of Sundarbans dwellers including fishermen, honey gatherers, woodcutters, boat builders and cultivators is neither Hinduism nor Islam but reveals aspects of both the religions. Two deities worshipped by them include:

**Bono Bibi:** She is the deity of the forest and protector of human beings and is revered by both Hindus and Muslims. This shared worship is a result of a shared dependence on the forest. The inhabitants of the Sundarbans consider *Bono Bibi* as an inextricable part of their lives where religious differences become less important in comparison to the rigours of their incessant struggle for survival.12

**Dakshin Rai**: He is termed as the lord of the tigers and is worshipped by all the dwellers of Sundarbans. While some mythologies describe him as the demon king of the forest, others describe him as a son of the Hindu deity, Lord Shiva.

The Sundarbans is dotted with several small temples dedicated to both *Bono Bibi* and *Dakshin Rai*.

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History of Conservation in the Sundarbans\textsuperscript{13, 14}

1878
- The Bengal Forest Department of the British Colonial Administration, applied the Indian Forest Act of 1865 to declare the Sundarbans, a reserve forest.

1974
- Parts of the Sundarbans in Bangladesh are declared as Wildlife sanctuary.

1979
- The Government of India establishes a National Mangrove Committee under the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 1979, with the mandate to manage, protect and re-afforest the areas.

1985
- The Indian part of the Sundarbans is declared as a national park.

1989
- The Government of India adopts the National Man and Biosphere Programme and declares the entire Sundarbans as a biosphere reserve
- A moratorium on felling of \textit{Sundari} trees enacted in Bangladesh
- The Forest Department in Bangladesh specifically, the Sundarbans Division brought under the newly created Ministry of Environment and Forests

1997
- Declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO

2001
- Sundarbans is included in the global network of biosphere reserve


Places of Historical and Religious Importance

- **Bagerhat (Bangladesh)**

  *Shaat Gambuj Mosque*

  During the 15th Century, a Muslim colony was founded in Bagerhat known as Khalifabad. Khan Jahan Ali built several mosques around Khalifabad thus making it the ‘Mosque City’. The name of the Shaat Gambuj mosque comes from sixty pillars or shaat gombuj that support the structure. It is considered as an architectural spectacle.

  **Kodla Math**

  This math or temple is located at a distance of 10 kms from Bagerhat city, on the Eastern bank of river Bhairab. It was built in the 17th century. It gets its name from the name of the village where it is located. The math represents a wondrous example of terracotta craftsmanship in Bangladesh.

  **Best time to visit:** November to March

  **Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** While Bagerhat city has the potential to attract a sizeable number of tourists, the tourism infrastructure is not well developed. For instance, there are no proper accommodations in the vicinity of both the sites. Popular tourism websites such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet locate the nearest hotels at a distance of 30 to 40 kms from the Mosque city near Khulna.

  **Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Bagerhat has huge opportunity to be developed as a site for history-based tourism; it also acts as a gateway to the Bangladesh Sundarbans. Given this, the government should incentivise locals to invest in home stays and restaurants to attract more tourists.

- **Sagar (India)**

  *Ganga Sagar and Kapil Munir Ashram*

  The region is named after the mythological King Sagar who meditated to bring Ganga down from heavens to Earth. According to mythology, Kapil Muni, a reincarnation of Vishnu turned King Sagar’s sons to ashes on being falsely accused of stealing their sacrificial horse. Later at the king’s pleading and out of compassion for the young princes, he agreed to their resurrection on condition that King Sagar would persuade Ganga to descend on Earth. To commemorate this event festival of Ganga Sagar Mela is celebrated on Makar Sankranti (January 14th to 16th), which is believed to be the date when Ganga...
descended on the Earth. Worshippers also visit Kapil Muni’s ashram although it is believed that the original ashram got submerged during the 1897 Bengal earthquake.

**Best time to visit:** The Ganga Sagar Mela is sponsored by the West Bengal Government and is organised every year in January (14th to 16th).

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** It is already a popular tourist destination due to its cultural and religious significance. Ganga Sagar Mela is the second largest congregation in India after the Maha Kumbh. This area is well connected with Namkhana by waterway. The condition of the jetty at Sagar is better than other such locations. However, the tourism infrastructure needs improvement in keeping with the steady increase in the number of visitors. While there is one tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available in the vicinity, they may not be sufficient to house an increasing tourist population. Additionally, local eateries may not be able to cater to a wide range of preferences.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** The local communities around the temple are already involved in tourism. However, more hotels and restaurants will create more jobs for the local residents.

- **Mathurapur II, Raidighi (India)**

  **Jatar Deul**

  Located in the village PurbaJata, this monument is preserved as an archaeological monument by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), according to which the monument was constructed in 975 BC by one Jayanta Chandra in a unique architectural style. Presently it is considered as a Shiv Temple by the local community.

**Best time to visit:** Although this spot can be visited throughout the year if one wants a taste of the local flavour, the best time to visit would be during Charak Mela, held on Chaitra Sankranti for eight days, which falls in the month of April.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** While it has immense potential to draw tourists, this monument has not gained sufficient popularity due to lack of awareness. Its location is also in such a way that this monument is better accessed by road and may not be suitable for cruise tourism. There are no accommodations in the vicinity and some basic budget accommodations are available in Raidighi.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** There is immense potential for developing weekend tourism in this area. Local communities could be encouraged to invest in home stays and eateries to attract more tourists.
• Gosaba (India)

Netidhopani

The name of this village features in Bengali Folklore (Manasamangal) and has been associated with Manasa (the Hindu goddess of snakes). There is a watchtower in this village, which offers glimpses of the ruins of a 400-year-old Shiva temple.

**Best time to visit:** Since it is located near Bay of Bengal, this spot is best visited during winter (November to February). Boat operators avoid taking tourists to this spot between April and August due to frequent nor’westers and monsoon showers.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** The spot is a popular tourist destination. Since there are no accommodations or eateries in the adjoining village, tourists generally prefer going back to Pakhiralay, which takes 3 hours to reach by boat.

There are not many opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism around this area.

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**Places of Natural Beauty and Wildlife**

• Bagerhat (Bangladesh)

**Koromjol Eco-tourism Centre**

This centre under the Chadpai Range is on the eastern side of the Bangladesh Sundarbans. There is a government managed deer and crocodile breeding centre at this location.

**Katka**

It is the eastern sanctuary under Sharankhola Forest Range with a watchtower. It is almost 152 km to the south of Khulna. Wildlife sighted here includes tiger, spotted deer, wild boar and saltwater crocodile.

**Kachikhali**

This place is located near Sarankhola Range, 14 km to the east of Katka coastal beach. Tourists can sight tiger, deer, crocodile, monitor lizard and many other mammals around this spot.

**Jamtala Coastal Beach**

Jamtala is almost 3 km from Katka on the eastern side of the Sundarbans. There is a watchtower on the beach.
**Dublar Char, Dimer Char, Pakhhir Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, Tinkona Island**

These small islands (sandbars) are found at the confluence of Sundarbans rivers and the Bay of Bengal. The beaches on these islands are popular tourist destinations, particularly for bird watching. Dublar char is also being developed as a seafood processing centre.

**Dolphin Sanctuary**

Three canals have been declared as safe havens for Dolphins by the Bangladesh government. They include (i) one around 12 km from Ghagmari check-post of Chandpai Range to Karamjal check-post through Dhangmari canal and Pashur River; (ii) another 15 km from Jongra check-post to Andharmari check-post through Mrigamari check-post and (iii) a third, five km from Duhkhali check-post to Supati canal through Bemara canal. These canals can be developed into potential tourist spots.

**Best time to visit:** November to March

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** The tourism in Bangladesh Sundarbans, unlike in India, is significantly spent on river. Therefore, in most cases, boarding and lodging have to be arranged by the cruise on the vessel. Of all the spots mentioned here, only Kachikhali offers a forest rest house.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is a need to develop better accommodations in Mongla.

- **Satkhira (Bangladesh)**

  **Kolagachia Eco-tourism Centre**

  This centre is on the western side of Bangladesh Sundarbans near the Burigoalini range. It provides tourists with an opportunity to go inside the forest. Goran and Khoilsha trees are abundant in this region. Among wild animals, deer is common.

**Dobeki**

This spot is famous for forest activities such as nature walks, guided village and honey collection tours and is accessible by boat.

**Mandarbaria**

It is difficult to access from both Khulna and Mongla. Tourists can reach it from Dublar char or Nilkamal. Wildlife sighting includes that of Dolphin, King Crab, Horseshoe crab, etc.
**Kalir Char and Putney Island**

These are small flat islands (sandbars). These areas are popular among tourists for their beaches and for bird watching. Both the spots are located along the estuary of Malancha River.

**Best time to visit:** November to March

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** The tourism in Bangladesh Sundarbans unlike in the Indian part, is much more river-based. Therefore, in most cases, boarding and lodging have to be arranged by the cruise on the vessel. There are some accommodations available in Burigoalini, which are largely maintained by NGOs.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Burigoalini has significant capability to develop village-based eco-tourism.

- **Khulna (Bangladesh)**
  
  **Harbaria Eco-tourism Centre**

  It is an eco-park with a jetty, which provides glimpses of the Bangladesh Sundarbans and can be accessed only by boat.

  ![Sundarbans Mangroves](image1)

  **Hiron Point**

  Located in the Nilkomol range this place is popular for sighting animals including tigers, deer, monkeys and crocodile. It is also popular with bird watchers.

  ![A Journey into the wild](image2)

  **Patkoshta Forest Camp**

  This spot is famous for nature walks and guided tours into the forest. The spot is accessible by boat, but accommodations are not available.

  **Best time to visit:** November to March

  **Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** There is a forest rest house in Hiron Point to avail for which prior permission is required.

  There are hardly any opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism in the region.
• Sagar (India)

**Jambudweep**

Located 8 kms South West of Bakkhali and Frazerganj, Jambudweep offers serene beaches and freshwater reservoirs. This spot is being developed by the Fisheries Department of the Government of West Bengal as an eco-tourism spot.

**Mousuni Island**

A small island near Namkhana, this spot has recently become popular among bird lovers.

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**Best time to visit:** November to March is the best time. One can also visit Jambudweep during fishing season to witness the fishermen in action.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** Both spots are well connected. Tourists can opt for a boat ride from Bakkhali to reach Jambudweep. However, there has been no development in terms of tourism infrastructure including accommodations, eateries and even roadways. Mousuni can be reached from Namkhana and offers accommodations in tents on the beach which hold an added attraction.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Jambudweep remains largely uninhabited except during fishing season that is from October to February. It is largely untouched and there is scope for developing eco-tourism especially during the fishing season.

Mousuni is already gaining attraction as a weekend destination for tourists from Kolkata. There is scope for development of tourism infrastructure.

• Namkhana (India)

**Bakkhali and Frazerganj**

Many deltaic islands spread across the Bay of Bengal, Bakkhali and Frazerganj are popular for their pristine beaches.
**Henry’s Island**

Located near Bakkhali, this island has a tower, which allows tourists a panoramic view of the island and the sea. The place is also home to millions of red crabs that are visible on the beach. Government run accommodation facilities are available here.

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**Best time to visit:** November to March.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** These places have shaped up as popular weekend destinations for tourists from Kolkata. There are accommodations and eateries in both places. The jetties that serve Bakkhali, Frazerganj and Henry’s Island are well structured and are well connected to the beach.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Identification of spots at Namkhana for development of village-based tourism is possible. Additionally, capacity building of locals to build more homestays and restaurants can be addressed.

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- **Patharpratima (India)**

  **Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project**

  Patharpratima is famous not only for its scenic beauty but also for being host to India’s only crocodile project. There are estuarine species of crocodile and Batagur Baska species of Tortoise.

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- **Lothian Island**

  It is a wildlife sanctuary, which is home to various species like estuarine crocodiles, olive Ridley sea turtles, spotted deers, jungle cats and Rhesus Macaques. Tourists are not allowed to embark on this island, but they can take a trip around the island in a boat.

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- **Kalas Forest Camp**

  Lying in the estuary of river Matla, this island is a breeding ground for Olive Ridley turtles during the winter season. It is also popular among bird watchers.
Best time to visit: November to March. Kalas can be visited only during winter months.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Patharp Ratima does not have good accommodation or eateries. Otherwise the block is well connected by both roadways and waterways. The Ramganga jetty, which is used by bigger ships and cruises is also well developed. Trips to the Kalas Camp do not usually commence from Patharp Ratima.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Local communities can be encouraged and capacitated to offer home stays and open eateries so that the spot can draw more tourists.

Lying in the estuary of river Matla, this island is a breeding ground for Olive Ridley turtles during the winter season. It is also popular among bird watchers.

- Kultali (India)
  
  Kaikhali and Kantamari
  Kaikhali dwells on the bank of the river Matla. The location is an ideal weekend destination for tourists and is well connected to Kolkata by road.

  Piymali Closure Site
  This spot has gained popularity as a location for family gatherings and picnics. It is located close to Kolkata and is best reached by road. There is not much scope for cruise tourism, but it can be ideal for day-long outings.

  Bonnie Forest Camp
  It is an island located in close proximity to the Bay of Bengal. There is a watchtower 50 feet in height and offers a spectacular view of the Sundarbans.

Best time to visit: Anytime, preferably winter. Bonnie Camp can be visited only in winter.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Kaikhali has only one government holiday home, which is maintained by the Ramkrishna Ashram at Nimpith and reservations can be made only through the Nimpith Ashram situated in Joynagar. There are no other accommodation facilities in Kultali. It needs to be mentioned that although Bonnie Camp belongs to Kultali block it is generally visited by tourists from Pakhiralay or Jharkhali. Boat associations inform that the stretch of Matla connecting Jharkhali to Kaikhali has on occasions faced the menace of piracy.

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: Local communities can be encouraged and supported to build home stays and eateries around Kaikhali to attract more weekend tourists from Kolkata.
• Basanti (India)
  
  **Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre**

  This is the first tiger rescue centre of India. It was established in 2012. Our team witnessed one tiger in captivity at the centre.

  **Nafarganj Island**

  This island has remained largely untouched by tourists.

  **Best time to visit:** Anytime, preferably winter.

  **Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** Jharkhali is already well established as a tourist spot. No other spot is as well developed for tourism in Basanti.

  **Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** There is scope for village-based tourism. Additionally, Basanti can be promoted as a gateway to Sundarbans. Nafarganj Island can be developed for weekend tourism by engaging communities in the development of home stays and eateries. There is also a mangrove interpretation centre.

• Gosaba (India)

  **Sajnekhali**

  Sajnekhali is one of the most popular spots in Indian Sundarbans. There is a watchtower, a mangrove interpretation centre, a *Bono Bibi* temple and a crocodile park. It is located close to Pakhiralay and is easily accessible from Godkhali (Canning). The watchtower has the capacity to host 20 people at a time.

  **Sudhanyakhali Watchtower**

  This watchtower located near Sajnekhali is becoming popular for tiger spotting. The watchtower has the capacity to host 25 people at a time.

  **Dobanki**

  There is an attractive canopy walk at Dobanki, which leads to a watchtower with a height of 20ft. There is a sweet water pond nearby, which is a haven for thirsty animals making the watchtower an ideal location for wildlife sightings.
**Netidhopani**

Apart from a watchtower, which can accommodate 20 persons at a time, this place also has a 400-year-old Shiv temple, which is associated with the traditional Bengali legend of Behula Lakhhindar. There is also a sweet water pond near this location making it ideal for sighting animals.

**Best time to visit:** November to March.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** This is the most developed tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans. The tourist spots are all located close to Pakhiralay, which has the maximum number of accommodation facilities in the entire Indian Sundarbans. Moreover, Sajnekhali also has a government guest house offering accommodation facilities.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Although the place is developed in terms of tourism, more village-based options can be explored.

• **Hingalganj (India)**

  **Jhingekhali Watchtower**

  This watchtower is located on the easternmost side of the Indian Sundarbans near the border with Bangladesh. Situated in close proximity of sweet water ponds, this watchtower can host 20 people at a time and is ideal for nature lovers desiring a glimpse of the animals in the wild. The watchtower complex also houses a temple dedicated to Bono Bibi.

  **Burirdabri Watchtower**

  This watchtower also located on the easternmost side of India Sundarbans on the banks of the river Raimongol. The viewpoint is called Raimongol viewpoint and offers tourists glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans. This watchtower is also famous for a mud walk and a mangrove cage trail. The watchtower has the capacity to host ten people at a time.

  **Entrance to Jhingekhali Watchtower**

**Best time to visit:** November to March.

**Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure:** Though well connected, tourism infrastructure is not developed here, which is why these two watchtowers fail to attract sufficient number of tourists compared to Sajnekhali.

**Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism:** Village based eco-tourism and home stays could be developed in Hemnagar, which is in close proximity of both the watchtowers.
Hasnabad (India)

Taki Ghat

Lying on the banks of river Icchamati, this old town offers glimpses of Bangladesh to tourists from its numerous ghats. One can also avail boat rides along the river. During Dusserah (Bijoya Dashami), one can witness numerous immersions (Visarjans) in the river Icchamati from both India and Bangladesh. The site is spectacular and attracts a sizeable number of tourists from all over India and even abroad. Recently this has been covered by international channels including The National Geographic.

Best time to visit: November to March.

Current Level of Tourism Infrastructure: Taki has a number of standard and affordable hotels and guest houses

Opportunities for development of infrastructure and facilities for community-based tourism: There is opportunity for weekend tourism especially along the river Icchamati. Machhranga Island located on the river and near Hasnabad, can be developed into a picnic spot.

Festivals of Cultural Significance in the Sundarbans

Bono Bibi Puja and Mela: Inspired by folklore and mythology down the ages, the population of Sundarbans in both India and Bangladesh sides observe a number of pujas and melas (fairs). Perhaps the most significant among these is the Bono Bibi Utsav. This festival resonates with the traditional dwellers of Sundarbans on both sides of the border. Bono Bibi is the deity of the forest, its guardian angel and is believed to protect human beings from animal attacks. The deity is revered by all the inhabitants of Sundarbans who are largely dependent on forests for their livelihood. They believe that praying to goddess Bono Bibi would protect them from tiger and crocodile attacks and snake bites. The most significant aspect of the deity is that she is revered by both Hindus and Muslims alike in Sundarbans. Indeed, religious divisions pale in the face of natural challenges that the dwellers of this forest have to cope with in ensuring their survival.

The worship of the goddess is celebrated during the month of March throughout several locations in both India and Bangladesh Sundarbans. The puja is accompanied by fairs, which witness large congregations of the local populace.

Tourists, both local and international, can get a real taste of the folk culture of Sundarbans at this festival. Hence tourism can be promoted around the time of this festival. The government can also take initiatives to popularise this festival as an important component of tours to the Sundarbans.
3. Field Insights on the Tourist Circuits

This chapter outlines all the possible routes for cruise tourism between the Sundarbans of India and Bangladesh including those that currently exist as well as other potential ones. Under each of the routes, possible trip plans along with places of attraction and availability of infrastructure are mentioned (please see Annexure 1). The chapter talks about the routes referred in the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT). This is an existing route, through which transit and trade is conducted between India and Bangladesh. The routes discussed below include.

- **Route A (Kolkata-Dhaka):** The Protocol Route: Kolkata – Namkhana – Hemnagar – Angštibara – Mongla-Dhaka
- **Route B (Khulna-Kolkata):** Existing Alternative Route (Bangladesh): Dhaka – Khulna – Burigoalini – Angštibara-Kolkata
- **Route C (Godkhali-Dhaka):** Existing Alternative Route 1 (India): Kolkata – Canning – Godkhali-Hemnagar – Angštibara – Mongla-Dhaka
- **Route D (Jharkhali-Dhaka):** Existing Alternative Route 2 (India): Kolkata – Canning – Jharkhali – Hemnagar – Angštibara – Mongla-Dhaka
- **Route E (Hasnabad-Dhaka):** Suggested Alternative Route (India): Kolkata – Hasnabad – Hemnagar – Angštibara – Mongla-Dhaka

**Route A: Kolkata-Dhaka; Dhaka-Kolkata**

A cruise ship may take five to six days to cross over to Bangladesh along the protocol route. The total number of days that may be required to complete the cross-country trip is around two weeks. A tentative day-to-day itinerary is given below along with two schematic diagrams that show all the possible attractions in the Indian Sundarbans and Bangladesh Sundarbans that can be covered by this cruise. It needs to be mentioned here that while the schematic diagram shows the commencement of the route from Kolkata, the route may commence from Dhaka as well.

**Day 1:** The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. It is to be noted here that since the sailing of the cruise significantly depends on the tidal wave timings, which vary every day, it may not be possible to arrange for sightseeing at Namkhana on the same day.

**Day 2:** Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry’s island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Thereafter, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night.
Figure 3.1: Schematic Diagram of Route A on the Indian Side

1. Bakkhali
2. Frazerganj
3. Ben Fish Island
4. Henry’s Island
5. Mousuni Island
6. Jambudweep

Sagar Mela: The second largest congregation after Kumbh Mela

1. Sagar Beach
2. Kapil Munir Ashram

Patharpatima (Ranganga Jetty)

e-rickshaw/auto

Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project

1. Dhanchi Forest Camp
2. Buraburir Tot
3. G-plot
4. Haliday Island
5. Lothian Island

Glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans

1. Jhingekhali Watchtower
2. Burirdabri Watchtower

Most popular tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans

1. Kalash Camp
2. Bonnie Camp
3. Netidhopani
4. Dobanki
5. Sudhanyakhali
6. Sajnekhali
7. Jharkhal Tiger Rescue Centre

Located near Kolkata, these spots are ideal getaways for beach lovers

1. Cruise
2. Cruise
3. Cruise
4. Cruise
5. Cruise
6. Cruise
7. Cruise
8. Local boat
9. Local boat
10. e-rickshaw/auto
11. Local boat

Gateway to Sundarbans and the only crocodile project in West Bengal
Figure 3.2: Schematic Diagram of Route A on the Bangladesh Side

Satkhira range
1. Dobeki
2. Kalir Char
3. Putney Island
4. Patkosta

A taste of village life: country-side tours, guided honey collection tours, guided forest tours

Khulna Range
1. Koromjol Watchtower
2. Nilkomol Sanctuary Centre
3. Hiron Point

Government-run crocodile breeding centre; animal sighting points

Ideal place for tiger sighting

Bagerhat
1. Harbaria Eco Park Jetty
2. Tinkona Island
3. Kachikhal Forest Office
4. Katka
5. Selar Char
6. Dimer Char
7. Dubar Char
8. Tear Char

Bagerhat: UNESCO World Heritage Site
1. Shat Gombuj Mosque
2. Kodla Math

The Bagerhat UNESCO World Heritage Site

Narayanganj

Dhaka

Hemnagar, India

Angthiara Ghat (immigration point in Bangladesh)

Mongla Port (anchor cruise)

Cruise

Car
Day 3: Early morning, cruise starts for Sagar jetty. From there e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni’s ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. Afterwards, the cruise moves to Ramganga jetty. From Ramganga jetty local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired for visits to Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir tot. The cruise anchors at Ramganga jetty for the night.

Day 4: On the fourth day, the cruise moves towards Bonnie Island. It can be anchored there for the night. Local boats can be hired to travel to Kalash island, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Sudhanyakhali and Sajnekhali.

Day 5: The cruise moves towards Hemnagar. Hemnagar is a Land Customs Station (LCS) at the Bangladesh border and is also used for immigration checks. From Hemnagar, local houseboats may be hired to visit Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers. The cruise can be anchored at Hemnagar for the night.

Day 6: The cruise completes immigration formalities at Hemnagar, and crosses over to Bangladesh.

Day 7: The cruise enters Bangladesh via Hemnagar in India and stops at Angtihara where it can complete immigration formalities before moving inland.

Day 8: From Angtihara, local houseboats can be availed to take a tour of Satkhira range including spots such as Dobeki, Kalir char, Putney island and Patkosta forest. It is a day-long trip, after which tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Mongla port overnight.

Day 9: From Mongla port local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Koromjol Watchtower and Horin Point. One the way back, tourists can be given a boat tour of chars including Tiar Char, Dimer Char, Dublar Char, etc. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 10: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka and Kachikhali forests. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise to retire for the night.

Day 11: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Kachikhali Wildlife Sanctuary for a day-long trip, after which the tourists can come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves towards Khulna overnight.

Day 12: From Khulna transfers can be arranged towards Jessore. Flights can be arranged from Jessore to Dhaka.

Day 13: Sightseeing and shopping tour in Dhaka. Flights are available from Dhaka for onward connections.
Tourism Circuits along the Route in Bangladesh

Bagerhat Circuit

Major places of attraction
1. Shaat Gambuj Mosque
2. Kodla Math
3. Harbaria Eco Park Jetty
4. Katka-Kachikhali Forest
5. Dublar Char, Tiar Char and Selar Char, Tinkona Island
Khulna Circuit

Major places of attraction
1. Koromjol Watchtower
2. Nilkomol Sanctuary Centre
3. Hiron Point

Satkhira Circuit

Major places of attraction
1. Dobeki
2. Patkoshta Forest Camp
3. Kalagachbia Forest Office
4. Putney Island and Kalir Char
5. Dolphin Sanctuary
Accommodations and Restaurants
The nature of Sundarbans tourism in Bangladesh is different from India as the former is entirely river based. Accommodations and food arrangements are, therefore, done on the boat. There are some guest houses at Satkhira maintained by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as Bangladesh Environment and Development Society (BEDS). There is also one government guest house in Burigoalini just outside Bangladesh Sundarbans.

Hospitals
Available at Jessore, Khulna, Mongla and Dhaka

Permits Required
Permits are required for entering almost all the spots inside the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve. These are issued by the Divisional Forest Office in Khulna. The forest tours need to be compulsorily accompanied by armed guards, provided by the forest office.¹⁵

Tourism Circuits along the Route in India
Namkhana and Sagar Circuits

¹⁵ Chakrabortty, Partha, and Andrew Eagle (2017), ‘Sundarbans tourism in disarray’ The Daily Star (December 12), Bangladesh. https://www.thedailystar.net/country/sundarbans-tourism-disarray-1503697
Major places of attraction
1. Gangasagar and Kapil Muni Ashram
2. Bakkhali and Frazerganj
3. Henry's Island
4. Mousuni Island
5. Jambudwip

Patharpratima Circuit

Major places of attraction
1. Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project
2. Lothian Island
3. Buraburir Tot
Sajnekhali Circuit

Major places of attraction:

1. Sajnekhali Tiger Reserve
2. Sudhanyakhali Watchtower
3. Dobanki
4. Netidhopani
5. Kalas Beach
6. Bonnie Camp
Hemnagar Circuit

Major places of attraction:
1. Jhingekhali Watchtower
2. Burirdabri Watchtower

Accommodations

Patharpratima-Namkhana-Sagar Circuit

Diamond Harbour: Both private and government accommodations are available

Sagar: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available

Bakkhali: Private guest houses available

Frazerganj: Government tourist bungalows are available

Mousuni Island: There are tents on the beach, which can accommodate up to 20 persons

Dakshin Shibganj, Patharpratima: Private budget accommodations near Bhagabatpur
Sajnekhali Circuit

Pakhiralay: Several accommodations are available at Pakhiralay

Sajnekhali: Only one forest guest house, which can be availed with prior permission.

Bonnie Camp: There is a tourist rest house for night stay. However, it is not supported by electricity and can be availed with prior permission.

Restaurants

Restaurants are available at Diamond Harbour, Kakdwip and Pakhiralay

Hospitals

Government hospitals and healthcare centres are available at Diamond Harbour, Sagar, Kakdwip, Namkhana, Patharpratima, Gosaba and Hemnagar
Permits required:

Table 3.1: List of Offices Providing Permits for Spots in Indian Sundarbans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the office</th>
<th>Spots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, West</td>
<td>All spots (North and South 24 Parganas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengal Forest Department, located in Aranya Bhawan,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake, Kolkata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directorate of Forest office at Canning I</td>
<td>Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakhali, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Kalash camp, Dhanchi forest camp, Bhagabatpur crocodile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>project, Jhingekhali, Burirdabri, Harikhali, Buraburir Tot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sajnekhali forest office</td>
<td>Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakhali, Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Kalash camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhali forest office</td>
<td>Only South 24 Parganas including Sajnekhali, Sudhanyakhali,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netidhopani, Dobanki, Bonnie camp and Kalash camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagna beat office</td>
<td>All North 24 Parganas including Jhingekhali, Burirdabri,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harikhali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following sections present popular routes in Bangladesh Sundarbans and the number of trips that can be conducted within those routes.

Route A: Existing Protocol Route on Bangladesh Side

![Route A: Existing Protocol Route on Bangladesh Side](image-url)
Figure 3.3: Schematic Diagram of Route A (Hemnagar-Dhaka)

- **Hemnagar, India**
  - Cruise
  - Angtihara Ghat (immigration point in Bangladesh)

- **Satkhira range**
  1. Dobeki
  2. Kalir Char
  3. Putney Island
  4. Patkosta

- **Khulna Range**
  1. Koromjol Watchtower
  2. Nikomol Sanctuary Centre
  3. Hiron Point

- **Bagerhat**
  1. Harbaria Eco Park Jetty
  2. Tinkona Island
  3. Kachikhali Forest Office
  4. Katka
  5. Selar Char
  6. Dimer Char
  7. Dublar Char
  8. Tear Char

- **Bagerhat: UNESCO World Heritage Site**
  1. Shat Gombuj Mosque
  2. Kodla Math

- **Narayanganj**
- **Dhaka**

- **Car**
- **Cruise**

- **Ideal place for tiger sighting**
- **Government run crocodile breeding centre; locations for animal sighting**
- **A taste of village life: Country-side tours, guided honey collection tours, guided forest tours**
Infrastructure on the Bangladesh Side

Infrastructure remains a significant issue on the Bangladesh side of Sundarbans. While some private companies provide houseboats, which are of a standard quality, most of the local boats available in the area are very large in size and can accommodate almost 60 to 100 people. These boats seldom follow regulations or standards. The government does not prescribe any regulation for them to abide by. On several occasions, they also do not carry proper permits for taking tourists inside the tiger reserve. These boats also lack adequate safety measures, which may be a requirement for international tourists. Additionally, the facilities inside the boat are not clean and hygienic.

With very few government accommodations in select areas such as Katka and Hiron Point, night stays have to be arranged inside the boats or cruises. It is also advisable to have on-boat food and water arrangements.

At many places, there are no permanent ghats for embarkation. Intermittent supply of electricity and mobile connectivity is an issue at many of the spots. Due to lack of tourism-based infrastructure, this part of the Sundarbans has witnessed a decrease in the number of national and international tourists over the past few years.

_Dhaka-Mongla-Bagerhat Trip: 3 nights/4 days_
Day 1: From Dhaka, tourists can fly to Khulna from where they can board the cruise. Before starting the cruise, trips can be arranged to the Shat Gambuj Mosque and Kodla Moth by road. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves towards Mongla at night.

Day 2: Local houseboats are hired to take the tourists to the Bagerhat World Heritage site including spots such as Dublar Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, etc. Thereafter, the tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 3: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka forest office, which is the gateway to the Sundarban National Park. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise and retire for the night.

Day 4: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Kachikhali Wildlife Sanctuary for a day-long trip, after which the tourists can come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 5: From Mongla port the cruise moves towards Khulna.

Day 6: Overnight Volvo buses or early morning flights to Dhaka can be availed.

Dhaka-Mongla-Bagerhat-Khulna Trip from Dhaka: 5 nights/6 days
Day 1: From Dhaka, tourists can fly to Khulna from where they can board the cruise. Before starting the cruise, trips can be arranged to the Shat Gambuj Mosque and Kodla Moth by road. The tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Mongla at night.

Day 2: Local houseboats are hired to take the tourists to the Bagerhat World Heritage site including spots such as Dublar Char, Tiar Char, Selar Char, etc. Thereafter, the tourists come back to the cruise for the night.

Day 3: Local houseboats can be hired to take the tourists to the Katka and Kachikhali forests. It is a day-long tour, after which tourists can come back to the cruise to retire for the night. The cruise comes back to Mongla overnight.

Day 4: From Mongla port local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Koromjol Watchtower and Hiron Point. The tourists return to the cruise for a night halt. The cruise moves towards Dobeki overnight.
Day 5: From Dobeki local houseboats are availed to take the tourists to spots such as Kalir Char and Patkoshta. The tourists come back to the cruise for night halt. The cruise moves towards Khulna.

Day 6: Tourists can either opt for overnight Volvo AC buses or flights to reach Dhaka from Khulna.

Route B: Existing Alternative Route: Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata

Khulna-Burigoalini-Dobeki Trip: 3 nights/4 days
Figure 3.4: Schematic Diagram of Route B (Khulna-Burigoalini-Kolkata)

- Dhaka to Khulna: Air
- Khulna to Burigoalini: Cruise
- Burigoalini to Dobeki: Cruise
- Dobeki to Hiron Point, Koromjol Watchtower: Cruise
- Katka - Kachikhal: Cruise
- Mongla Port: Cruise
- Khulna: Car
- Dhaka: Air

- A taste of village life: country-side tours, guided honey collection tours
- Ideal place for tiger spotting
- Government run crocodile breeding centre, animal spotting

Bagerhat: UNESCO World Heritage Site
1. Shat Gombuj Mosque
2. Kodla Math

The Bagerhat UNESCO World Heritage Site
Day 1: Take an early morning flight to Khulna from Dhaka. Tourists may also opt for overnight Volvo AC buses, which take approximately seven hours to reach Khulna. Embark on the cruise at Khulna and travel upto Burigoalini. Village tours can be arranged at Burigoalini. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. Cruise moves towards Dobeki at night.

Day 2: Guided honey collection and forest tour in Dobeki during the day. The cruise may also visit Kalir char. Night halt is arranged on the cruise.

Day 3: Early in the morning, the cruise starts moving towards Khulna. Tourists may opt for overnight Volvo AC buses to reach Dhaka. Else they may be accommodated in hotels at Khulna.

Day 4: Early morning flights to Dhaka from Khulna.

Khulna-Burigoalini-Dobeki-Katka-Kachikhali Trip: 4 nights/5 days

Day 1: Take an early morning flight to Khulna from Dhaka. Tourists may also opt for overnight Volvo AC buses, which take approximately seven hours to reach Khulna. Embark on the cruise at Khulna and travel upto Burigoalini. Village tours can be arranged in Burigoalini. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. Cruise moves towards Dobeki at night.

Day 2: Guided honey collection and forest tour in Dobeki during the day. The cruise may also take a round of Kalir char. Night halt is arranged on the cruise. The cruise moves towards Hiron point.

Day 3: Day long activity at Hiron point. Local boats can be availed to take the tourists to nearby islands including Tiar Char, Dublar Char and Selar Char. Night halt in the cruise. The cruise moves towards Katka-Kachikhali at night.

Day 4: The day is spent at the Katka-Kachikhali forest. After this, tourists come back to the cruise for a night halt, cruise starts moving towards Khulna via Mongla.

Day 5: Reach Khulna by afternoon. Tourists may opt for either Volvo-buses or flights to return to Dhaka.
The following sections present popular routes in Indian Sundarbans and the number of trips that can be conducted within those routes.

Route A: The Protocol Route on the Indian Side
Sojourns in the Sundarbans

Figure 3.5: Schematic Diagram of Chandannagar-Hemnagar-Bangladesh Route

- Chandannagar
  - Cruise to Millennium Ghat, Kolkata
  - Cruise to Namkhana Jetty (anchor cruise)
  - Local boat to Patharpratima (Ramganga Jetty)
- Bangladesh
  - Cruise to Hemnagar Jetty (Cruise anchoring and immigration point before entering Bangladesh)
  - Cruise to Pakhiralay Jetty (anchor cruise)
  - Local boat to Gateway to Sundarbans and the only crocodile project in West Bengal

**Chandannagar**
- Located near Kolkata, these spots are ideal getaways for beach lovers
  - 1. Bakkhali
  - 2. Frazerganj
  - 3. Ben Fish island
  - 4. Henry's Island
  - 5. Mousuni Island
  - 6. Jambudweep

**Millennium Ghat, Kolkata**
- Sagar Mela: The second largest congregation after Kumbh Mela
  - 1. Sagar Beach
  - 2. Kapil Munir Ashram

**Namkhana Jetty (anchor cruise)**
- Local boat to Patharpratima (Ramganga Jetty)
  - 1. Dhanchi Forest Camp
  - 2. Buraburir Tot
  - 3. G-plot
  - 4. Haliday Island
  - 5. Lothian Island

**Patharpratima (Ramganga Jetty)**
- E-rickshaw/auto to Bhagabatpur crocodile project
  - 1. Kalash Camp
  - 2. Bonnie Camp
  - 3. Netidhopani
  - 4. Dobanki
  - 5. Sudhanyakali
  - 6. Sajnekhali
  - 7. Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre

**Hemnagar Jetty (Cruise anchoring and immigration point before entering Bangladesh)**
- E-rickshaw/auto to Glimpses of Bangladesh
  - Sundarbans
  - 1. Jhingekhali Watchtower
  - 2. Burirdabri Watchtower

**Pakhiralay Jetty (anchor cruise)**
- Most popular tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans

**Glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans**
- Gateway to Sundarbans and the only crocodile project in West Bengal
**Kolkata-Sagar-Patharpratima Trip: 3 nights/4 days**

**Day 1:** The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. It is to be noted here that since the sailing of the cruise depends on the tidal wave timings, sightseeing at Namkhana may not be possible on the same day.

**Day 2:** Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry’s island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Once completed, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night. The cruise moves towards Ramganga jetty in Patharpratima at night.

**Day 3:** From Ramganga jetty local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired to visit Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir tot. The cruise comes to Sagar jetty at night.
Day 4: Early morning, from Sagar jetty e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni’s ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. After this, the cruise heads back and reaches Kolkata by night.

**Kolkata-Sagar-Patharpratima-Pakhiralay Trip: 4 nights/5 days**

Day 1: The cruise starts at Chandannagar or Millenium Ghat in Kolkata and travels till Namkhana via river Hooghly. The cruise can be anchored at Namkhana jetty for the night. Since the sailing of the cruise depends on the tidal wave timings, sightseeing at Namkhana on the same day may not be possible.

Day 2: Tourists can be taken for sightseeing at Namkhana to spots such as Bakkhali, Frazerganj, Ben Fish island, Mousuni island, Henry’s island and Jambudweep. For this purpose, local boats can be hired. Once completed, the tourists would come back to the cruise at Namkhana jetty for the night. The cruise moves towards Ramganga jetty in Patharpratima at night.
Day 3: From Ramganga jetty, local boats can be hired to take the tourists to Patharpratima. From Patharpratima, local e-rickshaws can be hired to take the tourists to Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. Local boats can also be hired to visit Lothian Island, Haliday Island and Buraburir Tot. The cruise moves back to Namkhana jetty at night.

Day 4: From Pakhiralay, local boats can be hired to travel to Kalash Island, Bonnie Island Netidhopani, Dobanki, Sudhanyakhali and Sajnekhali. The trip starts early in the morning. The tourists come back to the cruise for the night. The cruise moves back towards Sagar at night.

Day 5: Early morning, from Sagar jetty e-rickshaws or autos can be hired to take the tourists to Kapil Muni’s ashram and Ganga Sagar beach. Local sightseeing in Sagar can be done in two hours, following which the tourists can come back to the cruise. After this, the cruise returns to Kolkata the same night.

Route C: Existing Alternative Route 1: Godkhali-Hemnagar-Bangladesh

India-Bangladesh: Kolkata – Canning – Godkhali – Pakhiralay – Hemnagar (Immigration India) – Angthihara (immigration Bangladesh) – Chalna – Khulna – Mongla

Indian Sundarban: Godkhali – Pakhiralay (For Sajnekhali circuit) – Patharpratima (For Patharpratima circuit)

Godkhali Jetty
Sojourns in the Sundarbans

Day 1: From Kolkata, one can reach Godkhali by road and then avail various accommodations at Pakhiralay.

Day 2: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhophani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Early in the morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakali watchtowers. Thereafter, the tourists can come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. After lunch, boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.
Figure 3.6: Schematic Diagram of Route C (Godkhali-Dhaka)

- Kolkata → Canning → Godkhali (Cruise embarkation)
- Pakhiralay (anchor cruise) → Patharpromita (anchor cruise)
- Hemnagar (anchor cruise) → Bangladesh

1. Kalash Camp
2. Bonnie Camp
3. Netidhopani
4. Dobanki
5. Sudhanyakhali
6. Sajnekhal
7. Jharkhal Tiger Rescue Centre

- Most popular tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans

- Glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans

- Gateway to Sundarbans and the only crocodile project in West Bengal

- 1. Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project
  1. Dhanchi Forest Camp
  2. Buriburir Tot
  3. Holiday Island
  4. Lothian Island
**Godkhali-Pakhiralay-Patharpratima Trip: 3 nights/4 days**

**Day 1:** From Kolkata, one can reach Godkhali by road. From Godkhali tourists can be taken to Pakhiralay by local boats. At Pakhiralay tourists can stay at the various accommodations available.

**Day 2:** From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhophani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for night halt.

**Day 3:** From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Patharpratima for a trip to the Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. While travelling tourists can be shown around the Haliday Island, Lothian Island and Buraburir Tot. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

**Day 4:** Early morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sodhanyakhal watchtowers. Once completed, the tourists can come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. Boats can be arranged thereafter to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.
Godkhali-Pakhiralay-Patharpratima-Hemnagar Trip: 4 nights/5 days

Day 1: From Kolkata one can reach Godkhali by road. From Godkhali tourists can be taken to Pakhiralay by local boats. At Pakhiralay tourists can stay at the various accommodations available.

Day 2: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Dobanki, Netidhophani, Kalas and Bonnie camps. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Patharpratima for a trip to the Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project. On the way, tourists can be shown around the Haliday Island, Lothian Island and Buraburir Tot. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay for the night.

Day 4: From Pakhiralay, local boats are arranged to take the tourists to Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtower. The tourists come back to Pakhiralay and retire for the night.

Day 5: Early in the morning tourists can be taken to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhal watchtowers. The tourists then come back to Pakhiralay for lunch. After lunch boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Godkhali from where tourists can move towards Kolkata by road.
Route D: Existing Alternative Route 2: Jharkhali-Hemnagar-Bangladesh

Jharkhali-Pakhiralay Trip: 2 nights/3 days
Figure 3.7: Schematic Diagram of Route D (Jharkhali-Dhaka)

1. Kalash Camp
2. Bonnie Camp
3. Netidhopani
4. Dobanki
5. Sudhanyakhali
6. Sajnekhali

1. Jhingekhali Watchtower
2. Burirdabri Watchtower
3. Kumirmari Watchtower

Established in 2012, it is the first Tiger Rescue Centre in India

Most popular tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans

Glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans
Day 1: Tourists can travel to Jharkhali from Kolkata by car. After reaching Jharkhali, they can be given a tour of the Jharkhali Tiger Rescue centre. For the night they can be accommodated in the various private accommodations in Jharkhali.

Day 2: Local houseboats can be arranged to take the tourists to Kalas Camp, Bonnie Camp, Dobanki and Netidhopani. Tourists go to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel towards Kolkata by road.
Jharkhali-Pakhiralay-Hemnagar Trip: 3 nights/4 days

Day 1: Tourists can travel to Jharkhali from Kolkata by car. At Jharkhali they can be given a tour of the Tiger Rescue centre. For the night they can be accommodated in the various private accommodations in Jharkhali.

Day 2: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Kalas Camp, Bonnie Camp, Dobanki and Netidhopani. Tourists then go to Pakhiralay for a night halt.

Day 3: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists towards Hemnagar for a trip to Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers. Thereafter, tourists may be taken back to Pakhiralay.

Day 4: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel towards Kolkata by road.
Route E: Alternative Route: Kolkata-Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Bangladesh

Infrastructure

Basanti Highway, the most preferred road connecting Kolkata to Hasnabad is in a conducive condition. The road is dotted with several small eateries. At Malancha, which is mid-way along the route, the tourists can stop at PathaSathi, a state government initiative and provides clean toilets, waiting rooms, night shelter and restaurant under one roof. During the survey, CUTS team visited the Malancha facility, which is managed by the local women self-help groups and found it to be clean and well-maintained.

Hasnabad is a community development block in Basirhat sub-division in North 24 Parganas. Although the block has electricity, water supply and mobile connectivity, power supply and mobile connectivity may be intermittent particularly in the villages under this block. During the survey, the CUTS team did not witness any law and order problem in the area. However, since Hasnabad is located on the India-Bangladesh border, the possibility of occasional disturbances cannot be precluded.

The Hasnabad Vessel Ghat, which can be used for embarkation is in good condition. Taki ghat, which is located in close proximity can also be used as an alternative embarkation point (Refer Figure 3.9).

Source: Compiled by CUTS team from Google My Maps
Figure 3.8: Schematic Diagram of Route E (Hasnabad-Dhaka)

1. Jhingekhali Watchtower
2. Burirdabri Watchtower

Glimpses of Bangladesh Sundarbans

Most popular tourist circuit in Indian Sundarbans

1. Kalash Camp
2. Bonnie Camp
3. Netidhopani
4. Dobanki
5. Sudhanyakhali
6. Sajnekhal
7. Jharkhal Tiger Rescue Centre

Gateway to Sundarbans and the only crocodile project in West Bengal

1. Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project

1. G - Plot
2. Buraburir Tot
3. Haliday Island
4. Lothian Island
There are four to five private guest houses on the bank of river Icchamati in Taki. These facilities are well-maintained and can accommodate 20 to 30 guests each. There are no other accommodations on the way, hence accommodation arrangements have to be made on the boat. Similarly, while local eateries are available at Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Hemnagar, it is advisable to make on-boat food arrangements.

While the cruise can operate through river Icchamati, for entering the creeks of Sundarbans, the tour operators need to involve local boat associations at Hasnabad, Hingalganj and Hemnagar. These associations can provide two, three- or four-cylinder boats that can navigate through the narrow creeks of Sundarbans while the cruise can be stationed at Hemnagar. However, as already mentioned, safety arrangements in these boats may not be adequate.

The watchtowers though well-maintained lack amenities such as clean toilets. The accompaniment of Government-registered local guides is mandatory for visiting the watchtowers, and they can be availed at the Jhingekhali forest office. Since the area lies close to the international border, it is guarded by the Border Security Force (BSF) in India and Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) in Bangladesh.

**Hasnabad-Hemnagar-Pakhiralay-Godkhali Trip: 3 nights/4 days**

**Day 1:** The tourists reach Hasnabad from Kolkata airport in approximately two-and-a-half hours. A day-long sightseeing trip can be arranged at Hasnabad and Taki. Taki is a town in Hasnabad district. We have already highlighted its historical significance and its attraction for weekend tourists from Kolkata. Additionally, the entire stretch of river Ichhamati between Hasnabad and Hingaganj witnesses a number of Durga idol immersions during Dusserah (Bijoya Dashami) from both India and Bangladesh. This event attracts a sizeable number of tourists from India as well as abroad and is being covered by international channels such as National Geographic.
Tourists can also be taken to Machhranga island (Kingfisher Island) on river Ichhamati for bird watching. This island can be reached within 30 minutes from Hasnabad in a mechanised boat. Spread across 129 acres, the island offers a magnificent view of the river and the Bangladesh border. There are a number of picnic spots on the island maintained by the Hasnabad municipal committee.

The tourists can stay back at Taki for the night.

**Day 2**: Local boats can be arranged to take the tourists to Hemnagar to reach the Jhingekhali and Burirdabri watchtowers.

**Day 3**: Local boats can be hired from Hemnagar to reach Netidhopani, Dobanki, Kalash and Bonnie islands. For the night, tourists can be accommodated in the hotels in Pakhiralay opposite Sajnekhali.

**Day 4**: Local houseboats are arranged to take the tourists to Sajnekhali and Sudhanyakhali watchtowers early in the morning. Tourists may be taken to Godkhali post-lunch in local boats from where they can travel to Kolkata by road.
4. Cruise Operations: Impacts and Challenges

Impacts on Livelihood Generation

While the majority of the communities on both sides of the Sundarbans are employed as agricultural labourers, agriculture in the area is not a high-income source due to pronounced salinity of the soil. Therefore, people have to depend on a range of forest-based activities such as collection of forest produce, i.e. honey, wood, leaves and fruit, for their survival. This increases the human-wildlife conflict in the region and leads to human casualties. The alternative source of income in the region is fishery, which engages both men and women. However, in most cases, people are involved in collecting prawn and fish seedlings from the rivers, which is a high-risk engagement, and yields low returns.

Tourism being labour-intensive has the potential to create immense livelihood opportunities for both men and women and improve the quality of living. Previous studies have shown that increasing tourism in the Sundarbans improved the quality of employment and lives of the local populace. One study on the Indian part revealed that those employed in tourism activities spent 19 per cent more on food items and 38 per cent more on non-food items than those associated with other livelihoods.16

Additionally, tourism may also reduce dependency on forest resources, which can contribute towards conservation and reduce the human-wildlife conflicts. Studies have shown that the income levels in blocks such as Gosaba increased after the increase in tourism in the region. Similar developments have been observed in Namkhana and Jharkhali over the years.

Despite such advantages, tourism has not being able to create large scale livelihood opportunities in the region. This is due to a lack of proper training and capacity building of the local populace. During the survey, CUTS team observed that in many of the existing hotels, staff lacks professional training; they need to be trained in terms of hospitality attitude, language, presentation, etc. to enable them to cater to international tourists. The West Bengal Government is working on skill development of the local inhabitants to improve their livelihoods. To build trust between the Forest Department and the local populace in the Indian Sundarbans’ various eco-development activities are implemented by the Joint Forest Management Committees of Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve. These activities may include the establishment of self-help groups, piggery, goat rearing and poultry.

Such skill development programmes can be organised in tandem with the tourism sector. Additionally, in areas on both the sides, which have the potential to attract a significant number

of tourists but lack the necessary infrastructure, governments must be proactive and assist locals to develop viable and environment-friendly accommodations. Furthermore, the local motorised boats, which form the lifeline of Sundarbans tourism needs to be redesigned keeping in mind international safety and hygiene standards. The boats must be registered and regulated by the state government. These boats often use contaminated oil, which impacts the ecosystem of the Sundarbans adversely. Therefore, they need to be sensitised about waste management and fuel usage and disposal. Table 4.1 presents a cruise tourism value-chain matrix, which identifies the major stakeholders in this sector, their influence area and the key issues faced by them. Some recommendations such that their participation yields the desired result have also been listed.

The cruise tourism value-chain matrix consists of the following players:

1. Passengers
2. Cruise operators
3. Cruise crew
4. Jetty or barge operators
5. Local boat operators
6. Homestays
7. Local eateries
8. Village tourism

There is considerable scope for local employment generation in several domains such as cruise crew, jetty operators, local boat operators, etc. There is also significant scope for generating women employment in domains such as homestays, local eateries and village tourism, etc. With increasing numbers of tourists, demand for food and non-food items may increase in the local markets, which would indirectly benefit their sellers. Table 4.1 mentions the key entities of the cruise tourism value chain and also offers corresponding suggestions:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Role in cruise tourism</th>
<th>Entity scope/scope of local women employment</th>
<th>Key issues</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>They represent the demand for cruise tourism</td>
<td>Global or local</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge on local culture and sentiments; and Lack of understanding of local language.</td>
<td>A brief introduction on the culture, ecology and tradition of Sundarbans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise operators</td>
<td>They provide cruise services to the interested passengers</td>
<td>Global or regional companies</td>
<td>Preservation of the wildlife and marine environment; Usage of fuel; and Waste management</td>
<td>Capacity building programmes for lessening the impact on marine and wildlife; and Benchmarking their waste management and fuel usage standards with international cruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruise ship crew</td>
<td>They provide services within the cruise</td>
<td>Mostly local or regional</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge on local culture and sentiments; Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists.</td>
<td>Vocational training to improve their communication and handling of international tourists; and Awareness generation on the local customs and traditions of Sundarbans in case the crew is not local.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jetty ghat and barge operators</td>
<td>Those operating ticket counters at jetties or providing other assistance to the passengers while embarking or disembarking</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Communication skills; Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; and Communication skills.</td>
<td>Training on improving communication skills; Making them aware of the ecological vulnerability of the area and helping them to select proper waste management and fuel disposal systems; Informing them about international safety and hygiene standards for boat-based tourism; and Providing them with some kind of assistance to improve the infrastructure and safety measures in the boat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local boat operators</td>
<td>Small motor boats taking tourists to the creeks of the Sundarbans</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; Usage and disposal of fuel; and Safety issues in the boat.</td>
<td>Capacity building programmes to understand and communicate with international tourists; Providing assistance for developing home stays; and Capacity building programmes to make them better equipped in managing the homestays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestays and community-based accommodations</td>
<td>They provide accommodations to the tourists</td>
<td>Local women can participate</td>
<td>Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; Waste management; Resources to build home stays; and Hygiene issues.</td>
<td>Capacity building programmes to make them better equipped in managing the homestays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local eateries and restaurants</td>
<td>They provide food to the tourists</td>
<td>Local women can participate</td>
<td>Quality of food and hygiene of the place; and Service quality.</td>
<td>Capacity building programmes to make them better equipped in managing the restaurants; and Training programmes to communicate with international tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village tourism</td>
<td>Giving local tourists a guided tour of Sundarbans villages, their cultures and traditions and even unique livelihoods such as bee-keeping, honey collection, etc.</td>
<td>Local women can participate</td>
<td>Sensitivity to the tastes and preferences of tourists especially international tourists; Communication skills; and Safety issues especially in honey collection.</td>
<td>Training programmes to communicate with international tourists.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impacts on the Ecosystem of the Sundarbans

During the survey, it was observed that there is an apprehension among the forest department officials regarding cruise tourism in the Sundarbans. This is mainly due to the fact that the Sundarbans is an ecologically vulnerable area and they feel that cruise tourism may negatively impact the ecology. However, studies have found that increasing dependence of locals on forest resources in Sundarbans is one of the major causes of environmental degradation in the region. In this context, tourism can play a positive role in reducing the local population’s dependence on forest resources. Capacity building of locals to develop eco-tourism models including environmentally sustainable home-stays, restaurants and village tours, which when coupled to the river cruise can generate more sustainable livelihood opportunities in the area with minimal environmental damage.

During the survey, local boat operators insisted that they have repeatedly urged the forest department to open new spots in the Sundarbans to attract more tourists in the area. However, the forest department has refused to do so due to its apprehension about environmental damage and negative impact on animals. In this context, one suggestion has been to open new spots inside the core area, for which the forest department can charge a hefty sum. This would restrict mass tourism in those spots. The revenue generated can be utilised by the forest department for funding more conservation activities in the region.

During the survey, it was also observed that usage of contaminated fuel by local boats, and their disposal in the water causes serious damage to the Sundarbans environment. Solid waste management is also a critical issue since the boatmen, and even the tourists have the tendency to dispose of solid wastes in the rivers of Sundarbans. Therefore, capacity building should be done to make them better equipped in terms of fuel and waste management. It is interesting to note that some boat owners have themselves adopted innovative ways to utilise the used fuel. They are using the fuel to lubricate boat parts and machineries instead of draining it into the water. At the same time, the cruise crew and management should also adopt international operation standards to minimise their adverse impact on Sundarbans ecology.

It is to be noted here that the forest department of the Bangladesh government has proposed a ban on tourism in Sundarbans between June and August since the monsoon months experience inclement weather and also because this is breeding time for the animals. There are no such restrictions on the Indian side. However, getting permission during monsoon may be difficult.

Challenges for Cruise Operations

While cruise tourism through the Sundarbans is a novel idea that can generate significant returns, there are certain challenges that need to be resolved prior to implementing this plan. Some of these challenges are listed below.

• Least available depth along several stretches of the Sundarbans rivers

The governments on both sides need to identify these stretches and take proper actions such as dredging and de-silting. To facilitate international cruise tourism IWAI/BIWTA needs to declare additional routes and disembarkation points based on anchoring facility and places of tourist attraction. During the survey, CUTS team was informed that the West Bengal government had started dredging on an alternative river route from Kolkata to Sundarbans. The route started at Chitpur in Kolkata and was connected to Dhamakhali in Sandeshkhali via Adi-Ganga channel. However, the work was aborted due to administrative problems. It is understood that if the channel was made navigable, it could have acted as an alternative route for cruises travelling from Kolkata to the Indian Sundarbans.
• Protocol for operating customised cruises between India and Bangladesh

During the study, CUTS team met representatives from Vivada Cruise, the only company which has conducted one tour from Kolkata to Bangladesh via the Sundarbans. They mentioned that the existing protocol route is for trade and therefore the rules are tailor-made for cargo ships and may not be appropriate for passenger ships. For example, under India Bangladesh trade protocol, a ship from India can only anchor at designated ports in Bangladesh which include Mongla and Narayanganj. However, for conducting tours, the cruise needs to anchor at different places in Bangladesh Sundarbans. Similar rules are applicable for Bangladeshi cruises coming to India via the protocol route.

• Other issues

The immigration checkpoint at Hemnagar mainly caters to cargo vehicles. There need to be separate posts for immigration check of tourists. Also, piracy is a problem in these waters. Hence, there is a need for a protocol to facilitate safe passenger movement.
5. Recommendations

Inter-country cruise tourism through Sundarbans has huge potential to create economic opportunities for both India and Bangladesh. This is more so because the local populations on both sides of Sundarbans are economically marginalised. However, until and unless the above-mentioned issues are addressed, tourism may not yield desired results in the area. Below is the list of most critical issues that were observed during the study and the recommendations for addressing them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lack of tourism infrastructure in both India and Bangladesh | • Capacity building and financial assistance to local communities to develop eco-friendly accommodations;  
• Assistance to local boatmen to improve infrastructure and safety measures in local boats;  
• Regulation of boat associations active in the Sundarbans area;  
• Building more restrooms and waste disposal facilities on the way and near the spots;  
• Building more ghats and jetties for embarkation; and  
• Deployment of more floating police to address the sporadic issues of piracy and theft. |
| Lack of tourism orientation of local population | • Proper training and capacity building of local boatmen such that they can handle international tourists; and  
• Capacity building and vocational training of locals involved in hotels and restaurants to manage international tourists. |
| Difficulties in cruise operations                | • Regular dredging of the riverways to keep them navigable;  
• Establishment of new routes connecting the Sundarbans to Kolkata in India and Bangladesh in Dhaka; and  
• Need for separate immigration checkpoints for tourists crossing over to Bangladesh in boats. |
| Environmental impacts                            | • Need for an environmental impact analysis before making the cruise operational; and  
• Capacity building of cruise crew and boatmen for proper disposal of wastes and used fuel. |
Both Indian and Bangladeshi governments are well aware of these difficulties and have had close talks to mitigate these challenges. As the two countries signed the MoU on passenger and cruise services in both coastal and protocol routes in April 2017, the SOP for passenger and cruise services has also been signed. However, the progress in this aspect has been slow. While preparing the SOP may take some time the two countries can work on the following terms of engagement

a. Joint training for the guides of both countries. This can be done by the forest departments of the two countries along with NGOs. It would help in exchanging knowledge and best practices

b. Cooperation in boat design by bringing in boat designers and manufacturers of both the countries

c. The Bhomra-Gojadanga land post can be improved to accommodate tourists who may be interested in moving through land ports

It is recommended that both the governments should work towards adopting a seamless traffic pact between the two countries in the lines of the European Union (EU) to make cruise tourism successful in this region.

Alongside cruise tourism, other types of tourism can be explored in the Sundarbans area. Due to the region’s proximity to cities in both India (Kolkata) and Bangladesh (Khulna and Jessore), it is ideal for weekend tourism. In fact during the survey CUTS team observed that Block Development Officers in many of the Indian Sundarbans blocks are keen to develop weekend tourism in their areas. While this study has been constrained by time and has looked only into the prospects of cruise tourism in the Sundarbans, more detailed studies can be done to explore other types of tourism that can be developed in this area and their implications for the local population. Such studies can also offer insights into the lives of the local population and the ways, in which tourism can bring positive changes in their lives.
Table 5.2: Namkhana-Sagar Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Namkhana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required (issuing authority)</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the block</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kapil Munir Ashram</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>From Sagar jetty, this spot can be reached by road (e-rickshaws and autos)</td>
<td>Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana</td>
<td>1. This tourism block is already popular due to the Ganga Sagar Mela. 2. While it is not proper Sundarbans, Bakkhali, Frazerganj and Henry’s Island are already popular amongst weekenders and beach lovers.</td>
<td>1. Sagar island does not have many eateries, which pose problems for tourists. Hence assistance to local communities can be given to develop clean eateries specialising in local food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manasadwip</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>From Sagar jetty, this spot can be reached by road (e-rickshaws and autos)</td>
<td>Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana</td>
<td>3. There are a number of staying options at Bakkhali, Frazerganj and Henry’s Island. Accommodations are also available at Sagar.</td>
<td>2. Identification of spots at Namkhana for development of village-based tourism and capacity building of locals to build more homestays and restaurants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrityunjainagar</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Sagar jetty or Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>From Sagar jetty, this spot can be reached by road (e-rickshaws and autos)</td>
<td>Hotel: One government tourist bungalow and one youth hostel available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: At Sagar and Namkhana</td>
<td>4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented.</td>
<td>3. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jambudwip</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Can be accessed from Namkhana or Sagar jetty however tourists are not allowed to disembark</td>
<td>Local boats can be hired to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital is at Sagar</td>
<td>5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. 6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.</td>
<td>4. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mousuni Island</td>
<td>Namkhana</td>
<td>Natural/Sea beach</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>The local ghat can be accessed from Namkhana or Sagar jetty</td>
<td>From the local ghat, e-rickshaws need to be availed to reach the beach</td>
<td>Hotels: There are tents on the beach, which can accommodate up to 20 persons Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital is at Namkhana</td>
<td>5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. 6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.</td>
<td>5. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakkhali</td>
<td>Namkhana</td>
<td>Natural/Sea beach</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Private guest houses Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana</td>
<td>5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. 6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.</td>
<td>5. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry’s Island</td>
<td>Namkhana</td>
<td>Natural/Sea beach</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Government tourist bungalows Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana</td>
<td>5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. 6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.</td>
<td>5. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frazerganj</td>
<td>Namkhana</td>
<td>Natural/Sea beach</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Namkhana jetty</td>
<td>Local transports like e-rickshaws or autos can be availed at Namkhana jetty to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Government tourist bungalows Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Available at Namkhana</td>
<td>5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. 6. This area can be marketed as the gateway to Sundarbans. Jambudwip can be developed to give tourists a feel of the forest.</td>
<td>5. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.3: Patharpratima Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Ramganga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required (Issuing authority)</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ramganga jetty</td>
<td>Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws can be availed at Ramganga jetty to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotel: Nearest hotel available is at Dakshin Shibganj in Patharpratima. Two private budget guest houses available there. Restaurants: Only small local eateries. Hospitals: Primary healthcare centre available at Patharpratima. Nearest big hospital at Kakdwip</td>
<td>1. While Patharpratima is the starting of Indian Sundarbans, this block is gradually gaining popularity with tourists due to the Bhagabatpur crocodile project.</td>
<td>1. This tourist block does not have many good accommodation options. Since it has a high potential for Sundarbans based tourism, local communities can be engaged to develop more accommodation and dining options in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buraburir Tot (Watchtower)</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats</td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats from Ramganga jetty.</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima. Restaurants: Not available. Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and a Super Speciality Hospital at Kakdwip</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Buraburir Tot is a beach destination, which is now being developed for tourists. The location has high tourism potential due to its uniqueness of having a beach inside the Sundarbans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lothian Island</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Tourists are not allowed to disembark</td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty on which one can sail around the island</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima. Restaurants: Not available. Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and Super Speciality Hospital at Kakdwip</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 3. Need for more safety measures, such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-Plot</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty that can be availed for sailing around the island</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima. Restaurants: Not available. Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and Super Speciality Hospital at Kakdwip</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe, hygienic and tourist-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haliday Island</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats are available at Ramganga jetty that can be availed for sailing around the island</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. Nearest options at Patharpratima. Restaurants: Not available. Hospitals: Not available. Nearest primary healthcare centre at Patharpratima and Super Speciality Hospital at Kakdwip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues and recommendations
1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats.
2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats.
3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.
4. Selection of areas which can be developed for local tourism and capacity building of the local communities to increase their participation in tourism.

Opportunities of the circuit
1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans.
2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata.
3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay.
4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented.
5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates.

Means of commutation
Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats required to commute to this spot

Infrastructural amenities at the spot
Hotel: Only one forest guest house, which can be availed with prior permission. Accommodations are available at Pakhiralay, which is at the opposite bank of the river.
Restaurants: Available
Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba

Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay

Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay

Local six-cylinder boats can be booked at the nearby jetties to reach this spot

Table 5.4: Sajnekhali Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Pakhiralay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sajnekhali</td>
<td>Gosaba</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats required to commute to this spot</td>
<td>Hotel: Only one forest guest house, which can be availed with prior permission. Accommodations are available at Pakhiralay, which is at the opposite bank of the river. Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudhanyakhali</td>
<td>Gosaba</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local 2- or 3-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobanki</td>
<td>Gosaba</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netidhopani</td>
<td>Gosaba</td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local 3- or 6-cylinder boats can be hired at Sajnekhali or Pakhiralay</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Camp</td>
<td>Kultali</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local six-cylinder boats can be booked at the nearby jetties to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: There is a government tourist bungalow. However, the permission to avail this facility depends on the forest department Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospitals are at Gosaba and Jharkhali</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalash Camp</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Pakhiralay in Goshaba Block and Jharkhali Jetty in Basanti block</td>
<td>Local six-cylinder boats can be booked at the nearby jetties to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. Not allowed disembarking from the boat as of now. Prior permission required Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Not available. Nearest hospital at Gosaba and Jharkhali</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre</td>
<td>Basanti</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Jharkhali Jetty</td>
<td>Small boats need to be used to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Both private and government accommodations available Restaurants: Small local shops available which provide basic Bengali meal Hospitals: Available</td>
<td>1. This is the most popular tourism block in Indian Sundarbans. 2. It is also popular amongst weekend tourists from Kolkata. 3. There are a number of decent accommodations at Pakhiralay. 4. Since the area already caters to a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners, the local service providers are tourism-oriented. 5. The boat association is fairly large and boats are available easily. There is also transparency in terms of rates. 6. There is considerable scope of developing village-based tourism in this area to experience the daily life in Sundarbans. There is a nearby island called Bali.</td>
<td>1. Infrastructural improvement of the local boats. 2. Need for more safety measures such as life jackets, first aid medicines, etc. in the boats. 3. Training and capacity building of local boat operators to make their boats more safe and hygienic and tourist friendly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 5.5: Hemnagar Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Hemnagar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jhingekhal Watchtower</td>
<td>Hingalganj</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Nearest jetty at Hemnagar</td>
<td>Local transport like auto and e-rickshaws can be availed at Hemnagar to access this spot.</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar</td>
<td>1. While this block has potential it is yet to be fully developed into a tourism circuit. 2. The main potential lies in the fact that it also gives a view of India-Bangladesh international border. 3. The watchtowers located in this tourism block gives view of Sundarbans across the border. 4. Taki and Hasnabad are already famous for Durga Idol Immersion from both sides of the border at Icchamati. Both the spots attract a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners. The events have been covered by international channels including National Geographic. 5. Hemnagar serves as an immigration point between India and Bangladesh. Hence cruises definitely stop here before crossing over.</td>
<td>1. Barring a few options in Taki there are no accommodations in this tourism block. 2. Even restaurants are scarce. 3. The boat associations are also not very tourism oriented as is the case in other Sundarban tourism circuits in India. Hence capacity building is required. 4. Due to the presence of international border, spots can be identified in this block to develop weekend or short term tourism plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burirdabri</td>
<td>Hingalganj</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Nearest big jetty at Hemnagar. Local jetty for small boats available</td>
<td>Local small boats from Hemnagar</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar</td>
<td>1. While this block has potential it is yet to be fully developed into a tourism circuit. 2. The main potential lies in the fact that it also gives a view of India-Bangladesh international border. 3. The watchtowers located in this tourism block gives view of Sundarbans across the border. 4. Taki and Hasnabad are already famous for Durga Idol Immersion from both sides of the border at Icchamati. Both the spots attract a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners. The events have been covered by international channels including National Geographic. 5. Hemnagar serves as an immigration point between India and Bangladesh. Hence cruises definitely stop here before crossing over.</td>
<td>1. Barring a few options in Taki there are no accommodations in this tourism block. 2. Even restaurants are scarce. 3. The boat associations are also not very tourism oriented as is the case in other Sundarban tourism circuits in India. Hence capacity building is required. 4. Due to the presence of international border, spots can be identified in this block to develop weekend or short term tourism plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumirmari Watchtower</td>
<td>Gosaba</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Nearest big jetty at Hemnagar. Local jetty for small boats available</td>
<td>Local small boats from Hemnagar</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: Jogeshganj hospital at Hemnagar</td>
<td>1. While this block has potential it is yet to be fully developed into a tourism circuit. 2. The main potential lies in the fact that it also gives a view of India-Bangladesh international border. 3. The watchtowers located in this tourism block gives view of Sundarbans across the border. 4. Taki and Hasnabad are already famous for Durga Idol Immersion from both sides of the border at Icchamati. Both the spots attract a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners. The events have been covered by international channels including National Geographic. 5. Hemnagar serves as an immigration point between India and Bangladesh. Hence cruises definitely stop here before crossing over.</td>
<td>1. Barring a few options in Taki there are no accommodations in this tourism block. 2. Even restaurants are scarce. 3. The boat associations are also not very tourism oriented as is the case in other Sundarban tourism circuits in India. Hence capacity building is required. 4. Due to the presence of international border, spots can be identified in this block to develop weekend or short term tourism plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taki</td>
<td>Hasnabad</td>
<td>Historical and Cultural</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>At Taki ghat</td>
<td>Can be reached by cruise; One can take a car from Kolkata too to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Available Restaurants: Available Hospitals: Available</td>
<td>1. While this block has potential it is yet to be fully developed into a tourism circuit. 2. The main potential lies in the fact that it also gives a view of India-Bangladesh international border. 3. The watchtowers located in this tourism block gives view of Sundarbans across the border. 4. Taki and Hasnabad are already famous for Durga Idol Immersion from both sides of the border at Icchamati. Both the spots attract a sizeable number of tourists including foreigners. The events have been covered by international channels including National Geographic. 5. Hemnagar serves as an immigration point between India and Bangladesh. Hence cruises definitely stop here before crossing over.</td>
<td>1. Barring a few options in Taki there are no accommodations in this tourism block. 2. Even restaurants are scarce. 3. The boat associations are also not very tourism oriented as is the case in other Sundarban tourism circuits in India. Hence capacity building is required. 4. Due to the presence of international border, spots can be identified in this block to develop weekend or short term tourism plans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.6: Bagerhat Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Mongla Port

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harbaria Eco-park</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. One has to stay at Mongla Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td>1. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site.</td>
<td>1. While the area is a popular tourism circuit, not many accommodations and eateries are available. Lot needs to be done to improve tourism infrastructure in this circuit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachikali Forest</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotels: Forest rest house available Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td>2. Several tidal flats including dimer char, tiar char which are birdwatcher’s paradise.</td>
<td>2. The boats also need to be developed to support international tourists. Currently, the local boats are very big in size and used for local transportation, which makes hygiene and safety an issue. Houseboats although are in better condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinkona Island</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>May not be allowed to disembark</td>
<td>Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td>3. Already popular among both local and international tourists.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katka Ghat</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural and Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td>4. Dublar Char is being developed for dry fish processing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimer Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural and Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural and Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Island underwater for five months in a year. Apart from those months local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty</td>
<td>Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural and Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty</td>
<td>Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sellar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Natural and Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local houseboats or small boats can reach the jetty</td>
<td>Tourists may take local boats from Mongla to reach this spot</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaat Gambuj Mosque</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Best reached by road from Mongla</td>
<td>Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws at Mongla</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodla Math</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Best reached by road from Mongla</td>
<td>Local transport including autos and e-rickshaws at Mongla</td>
<td>Hotels: Not available. One can either stay at Mongla or on the houseboat Restaurants: Not available Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5.7: Khulna Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Mongla Port

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koromjol Watchtower</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. One has to stay at Mongla</td>
<td>1. This circuit is also popular among local and international tourists</td>
<td>1. Very poor tourism infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiron point</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Forest rest house available</td>
<td>2. Good view of wildlife. Tiger spotting also possible</td>
<td>2. Lot of work needs to be done in terms of building accommodations, eateries and improving the conditions of local boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilkomol Sanctuary Centre</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats have to be availed at Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. Restaurants: Not available</td>
<td>3. Hiron point is a fisherman’s island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hospitals: At Mongla</td>
<td>4. Crocodile breeding ground developed at Koromjol</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.8: Satkhira Circuit: Cruise Anchoring at Angtihara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the spot</th>
<th>Unnayan Parishad</th>
<th>Nature of the spot</th>
<th>Permits required</th>
<th>Nearest jetty</th>
<th>Means of commutation</th>
<th>Infrastructural amenities at the spot</th>
<th>Opportunities of the circuit</th>
<th>Issues and recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dobeki</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Wildlife and Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. Restaurants: Not available</td>
<td>1. Already popular among local tourists for bird watching, guided fishery and honey collection tours, etc.</td>
<td>1. Poor tourism infrastructure. 2. Lot of work needs to be done in terms of building accommodations, eateries and improving the conditions of local boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putney Island</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Wildlife and Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. Restaurants: Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalir Char</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Wildlife and Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. Restaurants: Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkosta</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Wildlife and Natural</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Local jetty for small boats and houseboats</td>
<td>Local boats can be availed at Angtihara or Mongla port</td>
<td>Hotel: Not available. Restaurants: Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annexure 1
Information on the Sundarban Tourist Spots in India

Pilgrimage sites in Sundarban (19 Blocks) and in Kolkata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Pilgrimage Sites</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Kapil Muni Temple at Gangasagar confluence point</td>
<td>State Fair, 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mathurapur -II</td>
<td>Ambulinga Shib Mela at Chatratirtha, Kashinagar in Chaitra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Andhamuni Mela at Chatratirtha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nanda Snan Mela at Kashinagar on Pous Sankranti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Charak Mela at Jatar Deul on Chaitra Sankranti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Patharpratima</td>
<td>Gobindeswar Shib Mela at Gobindapur in RamgangaGP</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Joynagar -I</td>
<td>Jaychandi Mela near Jaynagar – Majilpur Rly Station</td>
<td>15 days</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Canning-II</td>
<td>Bara Khan Gazi at GhutiaryShiriff : Mela in Asharh, Special event on 17th Shravan, Pilgrimage arrival every Thursday evening for prayer &amp; offerings all the year round</td>
<td>Mela in Asharh for 7 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Haroa</td>
<td>Pir Gorachand Mela in Falgun</td>
<td>Sometime in the Indian month of Falgun</td>
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Historical Heritage Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
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<th>Heritage Sites</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mathurapur -II</td>
<td>Jatar Deul in village PurbaJata- preserved as Archeological Monument by the ASI According to the ASL, the Monument was constructed in 975 BC by one Jayanta Chandra in a unique architectural style.</td>
<td>Route direction: From Sealdaha South Rly to Mathurapur Rd. Station then Roydighi on road and then from Roydighi to Jatar Deul by road. It is about 100 km from Kolkata. Presently it is treated as Shiv Temple by the local community, and an idol of Lord Shive is placed in its inner sanctum or Garvagriha. Melas and festivals are organised on various occasions especially Charak Mela on Chaitra Sankranti</td>
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Sojourns in the Sundarban
### 1.2. Cultural Events: Mela, Haat, Folk Culture like *Bono Bibi* Puja

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
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<th>Mouza</th>
<th>Cultural Events: Mela, Festivals, Puja etc.</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sagar</td>
<td>Gangasagar</td>
<td>Ganga Snan Mela near Kapil Muni Temple at Gangasagar</td>
<td>State Fair, 3 days 14th to 16th Jan, every year</td>
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<td>Manasadwip</td>
<td>Chodka Madal Sangkirtan</td>
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<td>Do-</td>
<td>Nag Mela (Snake Goddess)</td>
<td>5 days in November</td>
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<td>Mandirtala</td>
<td>Shivratri Mela</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Namkhana</td>
<td>Amarabati</td>
<td>Ganga Mela</td>
<td>Pous Sankranti 3 days</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jeliakhali</td>
<td>Basanti Mela</td>
<td>Falgun-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hingalganj</td>
<td>Bankra</td>
<td>Charak Mela</td>
<td>Chaitra- 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhandarkhari</td>
<td>Rash Mela</td>
<td>Kartik-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hemnagar</td>
<td>Kalpa Ganga Mela</td>
<td>Pous-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hingalganj</td>
<td>Dole Jatra</td>
<td>Falgun-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hingalganj</td>
<td>Chanralkhari</td>
<td>Hari Thakur Mela</td>
<td>3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhawanipur</td>
<td>Bhurkunda Tusu Mela</td>
<td>Pous-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhurkunda</td>
<td>Boro Bibi Mela</td>
<td>Magh- 3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Haroa</td>
<td>Haroa</td>
<td>Pir Gorachand Mela</td>
<td>Falgun-7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Khasbalanda</td>
<td>Rash Mela</td>
<td>Kartik- 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Minakhan</td>
<td>Bamanpukur</td>
<td>Pir Gorachand Mela</td>
<td>Baisakh-7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jaygram</td>
<td>Sitala Mela</td>
<td>Falgun-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mohanpur</td>
<td>Basanti Mela</td>
<td>Falgun-5 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1) In every Block: State-sponsored YUBA Utsav celebration with the cultural programme on 12th January every year
2) In every Block: State-sponsored Sundarbans Dibas celebration for environment awareness on 11th December every year.
3) In every Block: State-sponsored Krishi-o-Prani Sampad Utsav in December/ January every year

4) NGOs/ CBOs organise different rural fairs for environmental awareness, agricultural awareness – Matsya Mela, livelihoods development fair, health & nutrition fair, Sundarbans Development fair, book fair, baby show and other themes of local interest in different blocks

5) Mythological festivals, pujas and celebrations viz Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Biswakarma Puja, Mansa Puja, Ganga Puja, Eid, Muharram, Christmas, etc. are organised by different castes and religious groups and some of these continue to this day.

1.2 Established Natural Attractions

Sagar – Jambudwip
Namkhana – Frazerganj and Bakkhal
Namkhana & Patharpratima – Lothian, Prentice Island, Watchtower
Patharpratima – Bhagabatpur Crocodile Project
Patharpratima – Dhanchi Forest Camp
Patharpratima – Kalas Forest Camp
Kultali – Kaikhali and Kantamari
Kultali – Bonnie Forest Camp in Ajmalmari Forest Block
Kultali – Piyali Closure Site
Canning-I – Dabu Tourist Spot
Basanti – Jharkhali Tiger Rescue Centre and Herobhanga Forest
Basanti – Nafarganj Island
Gosaba – Pakhiralay – Rangabelia
Gosaba – Sajnekhali Mangrove Interpretation Centre/Watchtower
Gosaba – Sudhanyakhali Camp and Watchtower
Gosaba – Do- Banki Cat Walk and Watchtower
Gosaba – Neti Dhopani Forest Camp and Watchtower
Gosaba – Haliday Island and Watchtower
Hingalganj – Jhingakhali Watchtower
Hingalganj – Burirdabri Watchtower
Khatuajhuri – Forest Camp
## Annexure 2
### Information on the Sundarbans
#### Tourist Spots in Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Tourist Spots</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Koromjol Ecotourism Centre</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This centre under the Chadpai Range is on the east side of Bangladesh Sundarbans. There is a Deer and Crocodile breeding centre here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tetulbaria khal</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>It is under the Chadpai forest station and Andharmanik. It is a natural sanctuary of wild animals, birds, reptiles and otters. It is almost an hour’s distance from Mongla Port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harbaria Ecotourism Centre</td>
<td>Harbaria, Khulna</td>
<td>It is in the deep forest. There is a wooden watchtower in this area, which enables a scenic view. Special Attraction: Tiger (sighted most of the time) It is an hour’s distance from Mongla Port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kolagachia Ecotourism Centre</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>This centre is on the west side of Bangladesh Sundarbans near the Burigoali range. It provides the tourists with an opportunity to go inside the forest. Goran and Khoilsha trees are abundant in this region. Among wild animals, deer is common here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Katka</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>It is the eastern sanctuary under Sharankhola Forest Range. There is a watchtower. It is almost 152 km to the South of Khulna Wildlife is in abundance: Tiger, Spotted deer, Wild Boar, saline water crocodile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dobeki</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Dobeki is at a distance of two hours from Mandarbaria, Satkhira. A watchtower provides facilities to the tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kachikhali</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Near Sarankhola Range and 14 km east of Katka sea beach. Tourists can see tiger, deer, crocodile, monitor lizard and many other mammals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nilkomol or Hiron Point</td>
<td>Southside of Khulna</td>
<td>130 km from Khulna and 80 km from Mongla. Wildlife is in abundance: Raj Gokhra snake (King Cobra), otter, spotted deer and Tiger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mandarbaria</td>
<td>Southwest region of</td>
<td>- Western sanctuary of Sundarbans. - Difficult to reach from Khulna or Mongla. One can reach from Dublar char or Nilkamal. Wildlife is abundant: Dolphin, King Crab, Horseshoe crab, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sundarban, Satkhira</td>
<td>Coastal Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Sundarban Museum</td>
<td>Mongla town, Bagerhat</td>
<td>Subhash Biswas established this museum. He started collecting specimens for this museum in 1986. - photographs and specimens of wild and aquatic animals, trees, algae, orchids and many other objects of interest. - artefacts of the local and folk culture and tradition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2.2 Sea Beaches, Chars and Islands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Sea Beaches and Island</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jamtala Sea Beach</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Jamtola is almost 3 km distance from Katka on the east side of Sundarbans. There is a Watchtower on the beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kachikhali Sea Beach</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Kochikhali Sea Beach is half an hour walking distance to the south of Kochikhali Jetty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kotka Sea Beach</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>It is under Sarankhola range and almost 152 km from Khulna and one of the familiar tourist spots. There is a Watchtower here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mandarbaria Sea Beach</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>It is a local tourist spot almost 170 km from Khulna and 100 km to the southwest of Satkhira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dimer Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Its shape resembles an egg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pokkhir Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This char is near to the Dimer Char</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tiar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This char is a 2-hour distance from Kapil Muni Island by boat. Attraction: deer, wild bird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>It is considered as a tourist spot under Chadpai range. It is 90 km to the south of Mongla port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kalir Char</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>It is in the estuary of Malancha river. It is 70 km to the south of Mongla port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Shelar Char</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This char is mainly a natural shelter centre for fisherman in the coastal region. It is 90 km to the South of Mongla port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kopilmuni Island</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This island is in the estuary of Pashur and Sibsha river. It is 75 km to the south of Mongla port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tinkona Island</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>This island is in the estuary of Pashur and Sibsha river. It is 70 km to the south of Mongla port.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Putney Island</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>This island is in the estuary of Malancha river. It is 106 km to the south of Mongla port.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2.3 Pilgrimage and Historical Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Tourist Spot</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shaat Gambuj Mosque</td>
<td>Bagerhat</td>
<td>Shaat Gambuj Mosque was built by Khan Jahan Ali between 1400 A.D and 1500 A.D. It is 5 km from the Mongla port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shekher Barir Mondir</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>Temple of Kali, which is approximately 200-300 old. It is beside Shibsha river. It is almost 30 km to the south of Khulna Noliyan Forest Range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Relics of an ancient civilisation</td>
<td>Khulna</td>
<td>There are relics of an ancient civilisation 1.5 kms from Shekher Bari. Locally it is known as the civilisation under Raja Protopditto (1500 A.D.-1700 A.D )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chedonkhali</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Several relics are found in this area. It is near the Buri Goalini forest range, Satkhira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Relics of the salt industry</td>
<td>Khulna,</td>
<td>The relics are found in several places on the banks of Shibsa, Malancha, Pashur and Alki rivers in the area between Tinkona Island and Dublar Char. Satkhira</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2.4 Cultural Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Cultural Events: Mela, Festival, Puja etc</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Raash Purnima Mela</td>
<td>Dublar Char</td>
<td>3 days programme every year at Alarkole in Dublar Char. It starts on the full moon night of the Bangla month of Kartik (in the middle of November month). Though it is a Hindu festival, people from other communities also participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dashkin Rai Puja</td>
<td>Munshiganj, Mandarbaria, Dublar Char</td>
<td>Duration: Poush Shonkranti to Magh Shonkranti (30 days) (December-January)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Banadevi Naraiani Puja</td>
<td>Satkhira</td>
<td>Duration: 30 days of Magh month according to Bengali Calendar (Mid-January-Mid February)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bono Bibi Puja</td>
<td>Satkhira, Khulna</td>
<td>Among the local communities living near the Sundarbans areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kalu Rai Puja (God of Crocodile)</td>
<td>Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat</td>
<td>Fishermen of Bouali and Mouali normally show their respect before going to work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About the Study

Spread across the coastal region of Bay of Bengal and considered as one of the natural wonders of the world, the Sundarbans is a huge forest located in the delta region of Padma, Meghna and Brahmaputra river basins. The world’s largest coastal mangrove forest extends across Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts of Bangladesh and South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas districts of West Bengal in India.

The initiative to develop and promote community-based river cruise tourism between India and Bangladesh, especially in and near the Sundarbans, has the potential to not only popularise some of the existing tourism routes and locations in this part of the world, but also identify new destinations and routes for tourism that can do justice to the unique experience that Sundarbans can offer from an ecological, cultural and historical perspective. Hence, CUTS conducted a study entitled ‘Conceptual plan for integrating community-based tourism along the India-Bangladesh protocol route for inland navigation’.

For more information, please visit: https://cuts-crc.org/conceptual-plan-for-integrating-community-based-tourism-along-the-bangladesh-india-protocol-route-for-inland-navigation/

CUTS International

Established in 1983, CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) is a non-governmental organisation, engaged in consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and economic equality and environmental balance, within and across borders. More information about the organisation and its centres can be accessed here: http://www.cuts-international.org.