



Although many visit the beachside in Kuakata to lounge and relax while taking in the picturesque view, there are numerous activities, including horses and ATVs available for rent. Around 5,000 people in the town base their livelihood on the tourism sector. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Tourism awaits a fillip from long weekend

Hotels, resorts also offering up to 66% discount for World Tourism Day

JAGARAN CHAKMA and SOHRAB HOSSAIN

In Bangladesh, the peak season for the tourism and hospitality sector begins in September and continues until March. And the upcoming long weekend is going to provide an initial boost to the sector, with operators in major holiday destinations coming up with various offers.

Thursday is a public holiday on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladun Nabi and Friday and Saturday are weekly holidays.

For example, some hotels and resorts are offering up to 66 percent discount on the occasion of World Tourism Day on September 27 to promote tourism in major destinations such as the beachside cities of Cox's Bazar and Kuakata.

Marking the occasion, Royal Tulip, one of the largest upscale hotels in Cox's



Almost all hotels in Cox's Bazar, the nation's prime tourist destination, have come up with offers to attract holiday-makers

Bazar, is offering a three-night stay at the price of just one night, around a 66 percent discount on their rack rate.

All 484 of its rooms have already been booked from September 27-29, said Abdul Awal, director marketing and sales, Royal Tulip.

According to Awal, almost all hotels in Cox's Bazar, the nation's prime tourist destination, have come up with offers to attract holiday-makers.

He said there will be a three-day long tourism fair in the beachside city's Kalatali intersection, where hotels and restaurants will take part and provide

special offers.

On the other hand, despite offering no discounts, all the rooms at Seagull Hotels Ltd – the first five-star rated luxury hotel in Cox's Bazar – have been booked, said Gazi Nasir Uddin, head of marketing of the hotel.

He said they were fully booked for the long weekend beginning on September 28.

Md Emran Hossain, manager of Long Beach Hotel in Cox's Bazar, said they could not introduce any special offers for World Tourism Day as in other years since it fell on a long weekend.

Yet, almost all its rooms have been booked.

Md Shohanur Rahman Swapan, director (public relations), Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh, said the number of domestic tourists had been increasing after Covid-19 despite

economic vulnerability.

He said the sector would grow rapidly if the economy stabilises.

According to him, there are few vacancies in hotels across Cox's Bazar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet and Kuakata.

Swapan said this sector will be an important one in contributing to the country's economy as well as creating employment opportunities.

Hotels and motels in Kuakata, one of the country's top tourist attractions, are offering a 50 percent discount for World Tourism Day.

Tourists can avail this discount within seven days of September 27, said hotel and motel owners.

The Kuakata Beach in Patuakhali is located on the southernmost tip of Bangladesh. About 5,000 people rely on the local tourism sector.

The leaders of the Kuakata Hotel Motel Owners Association said 80 percent of the hotel and motel rooms had already been booked.

Motaleb Sharif, general secretary of the association, said a big event was being organised in Dhaka on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

In Kuakata, hotel and motel owners will hold various programmes, including a colourful procession.

"We are expecting a significant number of tourists in Kuakata compared to previous years as there is a three-day public holiday. Already 80 percent of the rooms in most hotels and motels here have been booked from September 27."

Shah Alam Howladar, president of Kuakata Hotel Motel Owners Association, said tourists were more interested in visiting Kuakata after the opening of the Padma Bridge due to the smooth road connection with the capital.

Hossain Mohammad Shakib, managing director of Hotel South Bengal, said 90 percent of rooms had been booked for September 28 and 29 while 80 percent were booked for September 30.

He expects those figures to reach 100 percent in the coming days.

Tour Operators Association of Kuakata (TOAK) Secretary Zahirul Islam said 70-80 percent of Kuakata's hotels were already booked for September 28-30.

"All thanks to Padma Bridge and seamless transportation system," he said.

Md Shaheen Khan, director of Hotel Banani Palace, said: "We are getting a good response from tourists due to the public holiday and the weekend."

According to the Kuakata Hotel Motel Owners Association, Kuakata has more than 170 hotels – large and small – with a total capacity of 15,000-20,000 people.

Bangladesh starts exporting printed circuit boards

JAGARAN CHAKMA

While already established as a major player in garment and pharmaceutical exports, Bangladesh is now expanding its presence in the global market for high tech circuitry, namely printed circuit boards (PCBs).

Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited is at the forefront of the local PCB industry as the country's sole manufacturer of the electrical component recently initiated exports to Greece.

A PCB is a laminated sandwich structure that is used as a medium to send electronic signals to connected components of an electronic device, thereby facilitating its various functions.

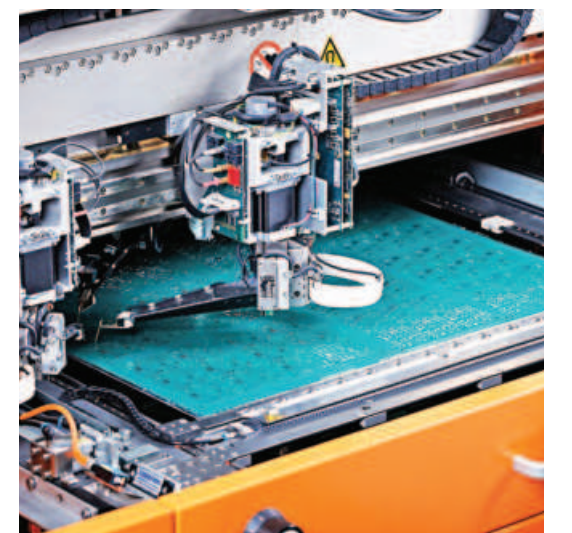
As such, PCBs are widely used in making consumer electronics, such as computers and smartphones, as well as automobiles and numerous other appliances, including industrial and military mechanisms.

Walton struck an accord with a Greek company for the sale of 3.6 lakh PCBs in January of this year.

So far, Walton has shipped 10,000 pieces of the product through the first consignment on September 20 while the remainder will be exported within the next one year, according to company officials.

SM Rezaul Alam, chairman of Walton Digi-Tech, said they made the shipment just days after commencing commercial production and marketing of their PCB products and assembly line.

"Walton is manufacturing and supplying world-class PCB products by making huge investments in the industry to meet the growing demand for IT products," he said.



"It was once unimaginable that such high-tech components could be made in Bangladesh but it is now possible thanks to the efforts and initiatives of Walton," Alam added.

He went on to say Walton will keep exporting PCBs to Greece every month at least until the initial order is fulfilled while also gradually exploring other markets.

"Walton is producing, selling and exporting different types of 'Made in Bangladesh' tagged PCBs using advanced foreign technology that make single or multi-layer products," Alam said.

"There is even the scope to order customised PCBs as per the buyers' requirement," he added.

Nasir Uddin, chief business officer of Walton's PCB products, said they decided to initiate exports after meeting domestic demand.

"We are now in the process of starting exports to other countries in Europe and America," he added, citing how this would pave the way for Bangladesh to increase its export earnings.

Liakat Ali, additional managing director of Walton Digi-Tech, set up their fully automated PCB manufacturing plant using equipment from Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

As it stands, the company currently meets 50 percent of the country's demand for 20,000 square metres of PCB per month.

"The PCBs are mainly used to make motherboards for all types of electrical and electronic devices," he added.

Malaysia boosts exports of palm oil to China

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia will increase palm oil exports to China by 500,000 tons a year as it faces pressure from new European Union restrictions targeting deforestation, a senior minister told AFP on Monday.

The trading bloc introduced new rules this year that ban goods from land that has been deforested, throwing its muscle into the fight against climate change and environmental destruction.

Palm oil is blamed by environmentalists for fuelling the destruction of rainforests in Malaysia and Indonesia, which together produce 85 percent of global output.

But the EU rules have been highly controversial in producer countries, with both Malaysia and Indonesia protesting the move.

Malaysia's Plantation and Commodities Minister Fadillah Yusof told AFP that his country was now upping exports to China, a major importer of the commodity.

"China's import of palm oil and palm-based products from Malaysia was 3.14 million tonnes in 2022," he said.

That will grow by the end of the year or early next year with "additional uptakes of 500,000 tons of palm oil" by Beijing, he said.

The increase is the result of a deal between Malaysian-headquartered palm oil product firm Sime Darby Oils International and Chinese state-owned Guangxi Beibu Gulf International Port Group.

It will "definitely" help Malaysia counter European curbs, he added.



A labourer dries wheat grains at a wholesale market in Amritsar, India, the world's second-biggest producer and consumer of wheat, has been trying to contain food prices before the start of peak festival season next month.

PHOTO: AFP

India could sell more wheat in open market

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Indian government could sell more wheat in the open market to control prices that have reached their highest in nearly eight months, the country's food secretary said on Monday.

India, the world's second-biggest producer and consumer of wheat, has been trying to contain food prices before the start of peak festival season next month.

"There's no shortage of wheat in the country and all options are open for the government to control prices," Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said on the sidelines of a wheat millers meeting.

Wheat prices have increased by nearly 4 percent in September as supplies dwindle in the face of strong demand for the coming festivals, traders said.