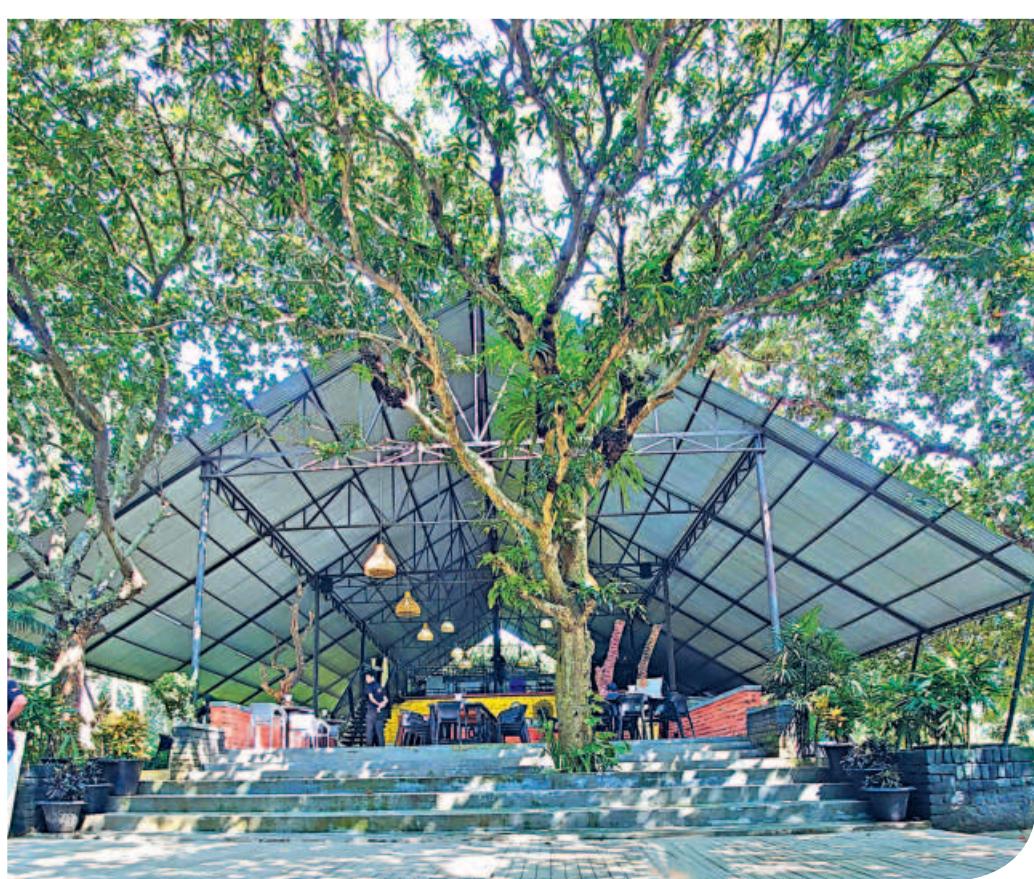




RESORTS ON DHAKA'S OUTSKIRTS

Resorts have become choice venues for corporate picnics and training programmes as well as vacations with family and friends, weddings, one day outings, and more.



SUKANTA HALDER and AHSAN HABIB

In one of your most distant childhood memories, you may recall hearing the high-pitched howl of a lone jackal way off in the distance while enjoying the evening from the comfort of your village home.

Now as an adult living in Dhaka city, you cannot help but feel the pangs of nostalgia and yearn for a return to simpler times. Thankfully, you can enjoy a quick escape from urban life by visiting one of several resorts that are within a two-hour drive from the capital.

lakh, Ferdous and his friends opened the doors of Chuti Resort in 2012, aiming to provide an easily accessible destination near Dhaka for ecotourism enthusiasts.

Following the success of their initial venture, the group expanded by launching a separate resort in Purbachal just five years later.

This was followed by the rapid establishment of two additional resorts and the acquisition of another in Pubail, Gazipur, bringing their total investment to around Tk 14 crore.

Over time, this growth led to the creation of Chuti Group, now a well-recognised asset and a brand valued at around Tk 90 crore, according to Ferdous.

Regarding their target demographic, Ferdous said their focus is on middle-income groups who may not regularly afford international travel or extravagant domestic accommodations.

"Most of our revenue comes from hosting events organised by non-government organisations during weekdays. Families also visit during weekends and holidays. Besides, we've noticed a significant rise in the number of weddings held at resorts over the past year," he said.

Meanwhile, a good option for experiencing agri-tourism has come in the form of Bongaon Villa in Bhaluka upazila under Mymensingh.

This venue would give you the opportunity to put together your own meal using vegetables picked from its fields and fish from a nearby pond. Chickens are also raised on the estate to facilitate future harvests.

One of the latest additions to Bongaon Villa is an aviary for birds of various species.

If you are planning a trip for the kids, Sobuz Pata Resort in Gazipur could be the perfect choice for its greenery and large playgrounds.

After completing his undergraduate degree in tourism and hospitality management, Md Abdullah Al Mahmud Khan worked in various capacities at several other resorts.

With an initial investment of about Tk 50

company Travelers Hub Ltd, which now operates Sobuz Pata Resort.

Khan said Sobuz Pata Resort was established on more than 20 bighas of land, with investments of above Tk 100 crore being poured so far.

Likewise, Mawa Resort located in an eponymous area near Dhaka and Munshiganj offers a wide range of high-quality accommodations within walking distance of Padma river.

The resort began operations in 2012, with the business centred on travellers using Padma Bridge. It initially attracted many foreign guests but now, the number of local guests has risen while corporate events are also held there alongside wedding programmes.

In the first four or five years of its journey, business was not very good but then it started to grow, according to Nasimul Hoque, the manager of Mawa Resort.

He informed that about Tk 10 crore has so far been invested in the resort.

Similarly, RASS Resort in Gazipur was built at a cost of around Tk 5 crore.

Abdullah Al Adib, manager for sales and marketing of RASS Resort, said people's preferences have evolved significantly over the past 20 years as they now want quiet and green environments.

He said that up to 98 percent of their clientele are corporate customers.

"But the flow of guests is not as good this time as it was last December. Most guests are going outside Dhaka for various reasons."

CONCERN REGARDING RESORTS

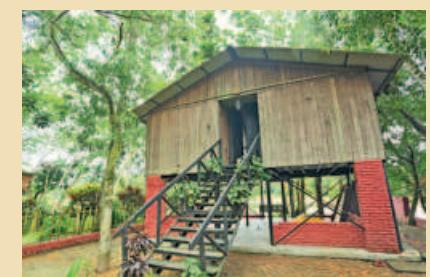
A number of people have raised concerns regarding the effect these resorts may have on their local environment while others say the rent costs are too high for low and middle-income groups.

Masudur Rahman, a private service jobholder who loves to travel, said it is expensive to enjoy a day at the resorts just outside Dhaka city.

"They are only convenient for family tours due to their close proximity to the capital. But if the resorts can reduce their charges, then they will get a much higher number of guests," he added.

SECURITY CONSTRAINTS

Md Naimul Huq, superintendent of the tourist police in Dhaka, said they do not have exact statistics on how many resorts have been



PHOTOS: CHUTI RESORT, SOBUZ PATA RESORT

MULTIPURPOSE USE OF RESORTS

Resorts have become choice venues for corporate picnics and training programmes as well as vacations with family and friends, weddings, one-day outings, and more.

Besides, a number of non-government organisations and corporations use resorts to host their training programmes and other company events.

Taramnum Mawla and Ayon Abrar, who tied the knot in 2022, said they held a pre-wedding programme at Towab Resort in Gazipur.

"We always dreamed of hosting colourful and lively pre-wedding programmes under the open sky, which is why we decided to have it outdoors. There's something special about the natural beauty of an open space; it felt alive, vibrant and perfect for the occasion," Mawla said.

"The sunlight made each moment shine brighter, capturing the magic in its purest form. Honestly, with such a beautiful setting, we didn't need much decoration. It felt just right as it was," she added.

Mawla also said it would not have been possible to conduct the daylong event at any traditional community centre.

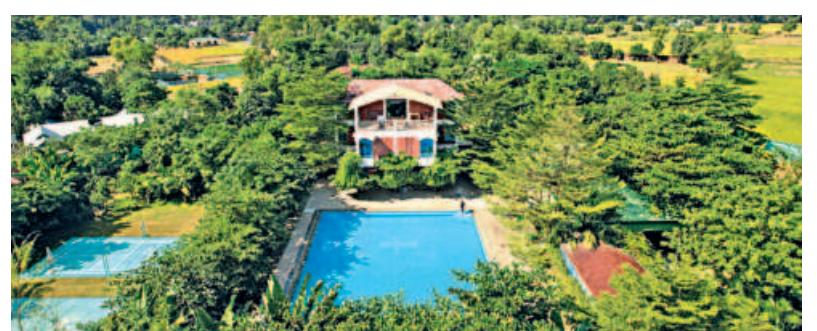
"The resort made for a spacious venue that offered many attractions, like a flower garden, pond, and kids' zone, giving guests freedom to roam and enjoy the surroundings," she added.

developed around the capital, but it is likely between 150 and 200.

"Even 15 to 20 years ago, people had to go to Sylhet, Cox's Bazar or hill tracts if they wanted to spend time in nature. But that trend has somewhat changed thanks to these resorts," he added.

He mentioned that in some cases, the inner roadways of areas surrounding the resorts have been developed through the initiative of resort owners.

"But we lack manpower to adequately protect all the guests. Nevertheless, we keep in touch with the resort owners. If they have a huge gathering, we ask them to inform us in advance," Huq said.



For example, Chuti Resort in Sukundi village of Gazipur is located just 18 kilometres away from the Dhaka airport and is easily accessible by road.

Built on 54 bighas of land, the resort boasts breath-taking natural beauty. You can even catch glimpses of wildlife and fireflies dancing in the night sky.

To protect its ecology, the resort has gone as far as banning the use of artificial lighting outdoors after nightfall.

Alamgir Ferdous, managing director and co-founder of Chuti Resort Limited, said the idea to establish the resort stemmed from realising that families had limited options to spend vacation and there was an untapped potential for inside Bangladesh tourism.

With an initial investment of about Tk 50

