

# Association between Economic changes and trend in Tourism Resort Business: Bangladesh Perspective

Karabi Kabir & Samia Afrin Shetu

## Abstract

Resorts are a part of tourism for outdoor recreation. Resorts are places arranged in an exotic location away from the hustle and bustle of today's life. The main feature of the resorts is the atmosphere and the comfort of enjoying a quality holiday with near and dear ones. The purpose of this study is to determine the resort business orientation of Bangladesh. This study focuses not only on the recent trend but also on the trend of establishing a resort business in Bangladesh. It seeks to gather the trends of this business along with the economic development of Bangladesh. The future assessment of this business is reflected in the last section of this article by assessing the past business trends of the region and the trends of other developing countries in the world. The findings outlined in this paper are expected to help the government, tourism stakeholders and policymakers of Bangladesh to understand the nature of resorts business trend.



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## 1. Introduction

The continued strength of the Asian economies makes this area perhaps the strongest opportunity for future resort investment and development. The rapidly emerging Asian middle class has sufficient discretionary income to patronize resorts, while continued relaxation of travel restrictions between Asian countries gives them almost unlimited access to the region's wealth of recreational opportunities. (J. Richard and Gregory, 1999) Bangladesh, a sovereign nation of the world has earned its independence only forty-five years ago. More than two hundred years of oppression and exploitation of British and Pakistani depressors the country achieved its freedom. As a war-devastated country, the main concern of the government was to re-establish the basic human needs of the people of this country. The country has shown promising growth in reestablishing its economy and position itself as a developing country. It is a country of the market-based economy holding 44th position in the world in nominal terms, and 32nd largest by purchasing power parity; it is classified among the Next Eleven emerging market economies. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Bangladesh's economy was the second-fastest growing economy in 2016 with an average growth rate of 7.1% (Arun, 2016). Since independence, the economy of Bangladesh depends on the agricultural sector then came readymade garments and remittances. Though still now the focus of all government was upon this sector that other possibilities are simply ignored. One such sector is the tourism industry. The country is blessed with various resources which can be considered as valuable elements for this sector. Besides as an overpopulated country, tourism can be an easy solution to solve the unemployment problem by employed them inside and outside the country. This will create a door of opportunity to get rid of the unemployment problem as tourism is a labor-intensive industry.

In the world tourism map Bangladesh is something unexplored. Despite the slow growth, Bangladesh's tourism is currently of moderate size. Currently, the potential of tourism is recognized and efforts are being made to reflect on development policies and programs. Bangladesh is a land of diverse cultures and natural beauty. Historians say the land has always attracted priests, merchants, and wanderers from different parts of the world. The newness of the tourism business is getting its popularity day by day. People are coming forward to invest in this sector which is quite an obsolete idea a few days back. As per the earning capability of people are increasing the inbound tourism sector is also flourishing day by day. Government policies play a vital role in this case. Private sector enterprises are also coming up with hotels, motels, resorts and restaurants, benefitting locals with jobs. Many local youths work as tour guides around the Sundarbans and Lavachara. The government is planning to provide more facilities in different areas to make it a priority for locals to sell handicrafts, poultry, meat, fish and vegetables. Resort business in Bangladesh is a very recent trend. Analyzing the timeline of when Bangladesh's famous resorts were founded, (Appendix-figure1) that most of them were built after 2000. Now a day many new resorts are being established across the country. The disposable income of the people is also increasing as the country's economic growth is growing, which makes people more willing to spend their extra money on vacation benefits.

## Literature Review

The resort industry has long been established in the hospitality world when it comes to more income-generating. Chuck Y. Gee (1988) defined that the resort as any place or place with good weather and good breathing, healthy leisure and leisure, food service, lodging, and public recreation facilities at a reasonable cost. Resorts that are often viewed as the luxury

side of tourism are available to a wide range of customers. Unlike traditional hotels that serve temporary customers, the resorts are seen as a destination and are designed to cater to excursions and leisure travelers (Chuck Y. Gee, 1988). Butler (1980) builds a model that shows the development stages of a particular resort. In the beginning phase resort may start off from being a small, low key, destination. Most of them follow this pattern. According to Butler, the exception happens if the area is truly unique which could preserve its attractiveness timelessly (appendix). Two recently revised editions on the model (Butler, 2006a, 2006b) highlight its importance as one of the most commonly used frameworks in tourism studies. In 2018-2019, Bangladesh saw an average growth of 11.6 percent in the number of tourists. World Travel and Tourism Council reported 125,000 foreigners visited in 2017. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the direct contribution of travel and tourism in Bangladesh's economy is estimated to be 4.4 percent in 2019 and 2.4 percent in 2017 of total GDP. In addition, it is projected to grow by 11.6 percent year-on-year 2022 (at a constant 2018 price). The total share of travel and tourism in 2019 was 987.1 billion taka. (WTTC, 2019 and 2017)

Research literature reviews are conducted for several reasons. One reason is to evaluate the state of current knowledge. Relatively speaking, a review of the literature, which is not known, evaluates the distance of the lesion. Second, it is common in literary reviews to discuss directions for future research on a topic. Such discussions are of value to the extent that they define productive lines of research and promote the integration of future findings with current knowledge. A third reason for conducting a literature review is to advance the theory. Good literature reviews can make strong statements about the validity of theories and stimulate new theoretical development. The fourth reason is to answer the "so what" question. That is, literary reviews can provide statements about the policy implications of research findings, based on research justifying practices (Guzzo et al., 1987). No such record has been established to identify the resort business as a cornerstone of business contribution to economic development and the economic development of Bangladesh. This research is known as distance and studies have been focused on this area.

## 2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the resort-businesses' growth pattern of Bangladesh and the specific objectives are –

- To investigate the reasons that stimulates the recent boom of resort-business in Bangladesh.
- To identify various factors that influences the concentration of resorts in a particular area.
- To explore future possibilities of resort-business in Bangladesh.

## 3. Methodology

The research methodology of the study focused on qualitative research in which a case-based approach has been followed to inform the research objectives. In terms of case selection, a 'typical case sampling' strategy has been emphasized where the cooperation of key informants sought out the cases (Patton, 1990; Suri, 2011). Under such an approach, few industry stakeholders (e.g. resort manager, resort owner) were initially consulted to find out typical cases. For a typical case sampling strategy, Patton (2002) mentioned that identifying characteristics for 'typicality' remains important. In this study, the criteria focus on the existing resorts established all over the country in different span of time. The case selection strategy additionally complemented by another approach called confirming and

disconfirming cases (Patton, 1990). This approach tries to find the trend in the resorts' business in Bangladesh.

#### **4. Overview of Resort business trends**

Monitoring a country's economic indicators gives a clear perception of the economic condition of that particular country. The unemployment rate, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Per capita income is important indicators to understand the country's economy. Bangladesh is relishing a vantage point of its economic condition during this era of time. The inspection of GDP from 1990 to 2019 shows the picture (appendix). In figure 2 shows that, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Bangladesh in 2018 is USD 274.03 Billion. Bangladesh's GDP is 0.44 percent of the global economy. Bangladesh is constantly improving its GDP growth rate. It also represents an improvement in living standards and per capita income. Tourism needs a huge amount of initial investment which is only possible when savings of people will increase. Increasing GDP and investment in this sector is very likely. So we can draw the conclusion that more developed the country will be the more investment the country will get for the tourism sector especially in the resort business.

##### **5.1 Resort Business Before 2000**

The GDP growth rate of Bangladesh during the period of 1994 to 2000 is 5.39 is the peak GDP of this period and the lowest is 4.08. The highest GDP of that period was 495. In this period very few resorts have been established in this country. Most of them were owned by government. One of the most prominent resorts in that time named Jamuna resort. It was established by the side of the mighty river jamuna in the year 1995. As a riverside resort the stunning views of the Jamuna Bridge and the breath-taking landscape attract many visitors. They also introduced convention facilities in their resort. Unfortunately, the government closed this resort recently. It is considered one of the pioneers of our resort industry. Besides as Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh most people living in Dhaka lead a very busy schedule. After a long working week usually people wanted to spend their time relaxing in a quite environment. To fulfill this demand some resorts had been established near Dhaka. The most suitable area for fulfilling this wish of town centric people is Gazipur. Many resorts were established and the trend is still going on. Another reason for establishing resorts in this part of Dhaka is for picnic purpose. Different organizations choose gazipur as their venue for annual picnic. The reason behind this was good communication system and it took only one to two hour to reach there. Safipur Ansar academy was one of them. In this time the resorts were providing very limited facilities to visitors. The main objective was to spend some quality time with friends and family. In case of other part of Bangladesh most of the tourist spots are not so much popular as it is now. As the transportation facility was not so good people are reluctant to visit those places. But in spite of all difficulties some visionary investors took some initiative to establish resorts in such unfavorable condition. One of the most notable mentions would be Abakash Parjatan resort in Saint Martin Island. It is considered as one of the pioneering resorts in this island.

##### **5.2 2000 to 2010**

In 2000 the first privately owned resort was founded by DR. M. Haider Uzman has named the Elenga Resort in Tangle. It covers a total area of 8.5 acres with lush green grass, unripe plants and seasonal fruit trees and colorful tropical flowers. People visiting the resort have the benefit of sightseeing in their neighborhood. To nourish one's spirit, a tourist can enjoy a hospitality-friendly tradition as well as pollution-free air and natural peace. Resorts cater to individual family needs as well as corporate demands for workshops, retreats and meetings.

Another privately owned resort also started their journey almost in the same time. It is also considered as first eco-resort in Bangladesh. The name of the resort is Arunima Countryside and Golf resort. It is situated in Narail. They have arranged different types of unique facilities for the visitors among them Boathouse, lakeside Chalet Cottage and in the middle of the lake-cottage are most attractive. Their main tagline is “Relax and Reboot” yourself. Another attraction of this resort is the bird sanctuary. Their bird watching platform facing the bird’s sanctuary is a place where visitors can let themselves loose and feel nature at peace. Millions of migratory and native birds flock here all year-round. Migratory birds stay here from November to May. Besides this natural cure, the spa is also offered in this resort. In the resort history of Bangladesh, a new milestone has been made by Concord group in 2002. They established Resort Atlantis along with the most popular theme park in the Bangladesh Fantasy Kingdom. They made a wonderful theme park full of exciting and thrilling rides which create a huge hype in the market. They also choose a very good location in Ashulia as it is very near to Dhaka city. It became one of the most popular places during that time. People of all ages used to visit that place and spend quality time with their family. They also used to offer a transportation service of their own. At first, the room capacity of the resort was twenty-four later in 2011 it enhanced up to sixty-three rooms. The size of the theme park also increased later by introducing the Water Kingdom and Heritage kingdom. Till now it is one of the most popular places for the city dwellers to spend their weekend.

With the improvement of the communication system, other beautiful place of Bangladesh also begun to be explored by the people. Bangladesh Army took a wonderful project to make a resort in the hilly Bandarban area. By their hard labor and dedication The Nilgiri resorts has been established in 2005. Previously it was an Army base camp. The main attraction of the resort is living in the cloud. The resort is surrounded by beautiful hilly natural views and clouds most of the time. Though the accommodation capacity of the resort is not many and people have to go through certain rules regulation and policy to visit the place like Bangladeshi tourist have to book the resort through any serving Bangladesh military officer. This resort made a revolutionary change in the history of the tourism industry in the hill track area of Bangladesh. It became a popular tourist spot and people from all over the world started visiting this place.

Another notable riverside resort during this period is Padma resort. It started business in 2007. The main attraction of this resort is the mighty river Padma. In Cox’s bazaar Mermaid eco-resort and Mermaid beach resort started their journey in 2007. It is an exclusive beach resort targeted higher income class people of the all around the world. In this resort they always try to maintain all the criterion of sustainability. They used eco-friendly materials to build their structure. They use all fresh locally produced ingredients to serve their dishes. Even they provide handmade herbal toiletries thus it causes less harm to the environment. Beside this, another important contribution has been done by the establishment of Foye’s Lake resort. It is considered as one of the most prominent lakeside resort in Bangladesh. It started in 2008 and till now going in a full swing. The exotic view of Foye’s lake is the main attraction of this resort as well as Foye’s lake amusement world added extra excitement to the mind of the people visit this place.

In the northeastern side of Bangladesh surrounding the tea garden, some new resort started their business during this period. These are considered as tea garden resorts. Among them one of the pioneering resorts is Nazimgarh garden resort in khadimnagar, Sylhet. It was



established in 2009. Because of the success of this resort two new branch of this resort has been opened in Lalakhal, Sylhet named Nazimgarh Wilderness and Nazimgarh Nature Park. So we can see that during this period of time people are investing more money in resort industry and they started considering it as a profitable business. Some other popular resorts during this period include Pakshi resort at Pabna; Blue marine resort, Panna resort and Nil digonta Resort at Saint martin's island; Rangamati waterfront resort, Green Tech resort and Third terrace resort at Gazipur etc. Stable GDP growth influences investors to invest more. This consistency in economy leads many investors to invest in resort business. So many famous resorts in Bangladesh have started during these three years. The consistent growth per capita income continued reached 729 at end of this era.

### **5.3 2011 to 2016**

Steady growth in Bangladesh's economy. The per capita income of people is also increasing. More women are joining the workforce. The disposable income of the people is also increasing day by day. Now people are searching for better facilities and recreation opportunities for spending their leisure time. So the value for money concept is getting popularized in our country also. To meet this type of customer demand people are investing a huge amount of money in the resort business now a day. Many of our resorts are giving world-class services to customers. We can see this trend in many of our recently established resorts. Among them, Grand Sultan Tea Resort, The Palace Resort and DuSai Resort of Sylhet are the most notable examples. All of these are five-star luxurious resort giving world-class services to their customers. The quality is getting more important to the customers. People are spending a lot of money to enjoy a memorable time with their friends and family. Beside different national and multinational companies are organizing different types of incentive trips for their workforce. These increase the working capability of the employees and revive their dedication to work. For these purposes, resorts are the best option. New places are also discovered and a good communication system creates a new door for resort business. Sajek resort in Rangamati is such an example. It is also a project of the Bangladesh army and it is called the Darjeeling of Bangladesh for its magnificent scenic beauty. Some small boutique resorts also being established throughout the country. The main characteristic of these types of resorts is that the accommodation facilities are limited. Sometimes people in a group rent the whole resort and spend their time together. Nokkhottrobari Resort and Ananda park resort at Gazipur; Maya eco-resort at Sundarban; Panigram resort at Jessor; Arshinagar resort at Joydebpur are popular among them.

## **5. Graphical representation of resort established in different part of Bangladesh over time**

Figure 3 has been drawn to reflect the growing number of resorts in Bangladesh from time to time. From this picture, we can see that the number of resorts is increasing which is a good sign of indication for the prosperity of this industry. As the trend is very recently most of the resorts are going through a growth/ development stage.

## **7. Summary of Analysis**

As inbound tourism is flourishing in this country people try to seek escape from the daily hustle and bustle of life than before. New tourism destinations are exploring by different adventures group which are creating more opportunities for this business. For example – remote places of Bandaban, Rangamit, Khagrachori and other parts of Chittagong Hill tracks are possible places where new resorts can be established.

Customers are getting more demanded over their service. So more five-star resorts will do profitable business in the future. More business tourists will be their targeted customers. Sustainable business practice needs to be increased as it is the most important agenda to protect the world but all these improvements are depending upon the government policy and all. Tourism is one of the most labor-intensive industries. To utilize the unemployed population poll of this populated country government needs to give more attention to this sector to get better benefits. Developing the local economy resorts can be an easy solution. Resorts give jobs to many local people as well as popularize the destination. Local agriculture will also be benefited as farmers can directly sell their products to Resorts of that particular area.

## **8. Policy implication**

The resort business is comparatively a new trend in Bangladesh. It is getting popular day by day as per capita income of this country people is increasing. The following recommendations have been designed especially for the resort business of Bangladesh.

### **8.1 Resort Image Changes**

Changing demographics and shrinking markets have made the fight for tourist money very intense. No resort now sits back on the rewards of its beachfront location and expects repeat business. Understanding the changing demographics, economic conditions, and priorities of clientele is going to be critical for planning effective marketing campaigns for the future.

### **8.2 Economics and Priorities Influence Choice of Resorts**

Previously, resorts offered packages running from Saturday-to-Saturday or Sunday-to-Sunday. Now, with two-income families and more responsibilities for home and work, most couples will only be away for a few days. This has led to a significant increase in the number of "short-term" resort goers. By taking more holidays in a shorter period of time, consumers will feel they are getting more from their money. Resorts need to realize this trend and develop this market capable package. It is clear that a new image and direction are needed for the industry. How each individual resort or corporation goes about determining a strategy for the future will be crucial to their individual success. When considering a plan for their future, resorts should keep in mind three basic trends in expanding market share in the industry: expanding current markets, creating new markets, and expanding services.

### **8.3 Current Market Expansion**

The first and most basic step to increasing market share in the resort industry is to keep and expand the current customer base. It is important that the resorts stay in touch with the needs of their current guests and meet them. Resorts should provide services that look not only on paper but on the value and use of their guests. Resorts should encourage repeat business. Once the needs of a resort guest can be met, there is no reason to believe that the future will be different for the guest. It is a good practice to send direct mail to previous customers so that the customer can find out the upcoming special events and discounts. With the increasing cost of advertising of every kind, Word of Mouth is becoming the most effective and inexpensive way to tell others about resort facilities and services. By making current guests happy, guests will spread positive experiences with their friends and relatives.

### **8.4 Creating New Market Segment**

The only way to create new market segments is to inform potential guests about the services they are offering. The most popular way to do this is to host special events, which cover a wide range of topics and usually come with good publicity for the resort. Special events usually attract people, not because they are interested in the resort, but because they are interested in the event. The appearance of guests at the resort is just a benefit. Special events

include concerts, folk festivals and sporting events. Usually, discounted rooms and special services are offered by the resort in exchange for exposure to the company promoting the special event.

### **8.5 Providing better service**

The primary solution to maintain and increase market share is to increase available services. However, in order to be a decision-maker in a potential guest's decision, services must be given priority. Children play an increasingly important role in the family's decision. Therefore, the resorts need to start offering comprehensive programs for children of all ages. It is not enough to provide a supervised room for parents to leave their children throughout the day. Instead, the resorts should provide a supervised interactive experience in which children are taught in a variety of sports and activities based on age. Depending on the age of the child, the programs have different daily routines that start at breakfast and end in the evening. The child is older, he has to be brave. This way the whole family can benefit from resort facilities.

### **Last Thoughts**

In Bangladesh, the average GDP growth rate is 6%. The economy is heavily dependent on workforce exports, ready-made garments (RMG) and agriculture. Other major sectors are shipbuilding, pharmaceuticals, etc. The employment rate is 90%, which is below the level of employment. Besides, lower-paid employment and employment in disguise are increasing. Many people are crossing the border illegally for a better life. To improve the employment rate and prevent illegal immigration, the government must implement certain projects and policies through tourism industry to achieve social, cultural and economic benefits. The government recently approved Cox's Bazar Development Authority (CDA) at the ministry meeting as part of tourism development. The Bangladesh government should give equal importance to the development of tourist destinations throughout the country. This creates employment opportunities on the one hand, and on the other hand, it reduces the country's dependence on certain other sectors. As the influx of inbound tourists grows, the resort will eventually become one of the most lucrative businesses. Although there is a shortage of outbound tourist pools in this country, the tourism industry is slowing down if the country continues to maintain its current pace.

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## Appendix

Figure 1: The five stages of the Butler Model

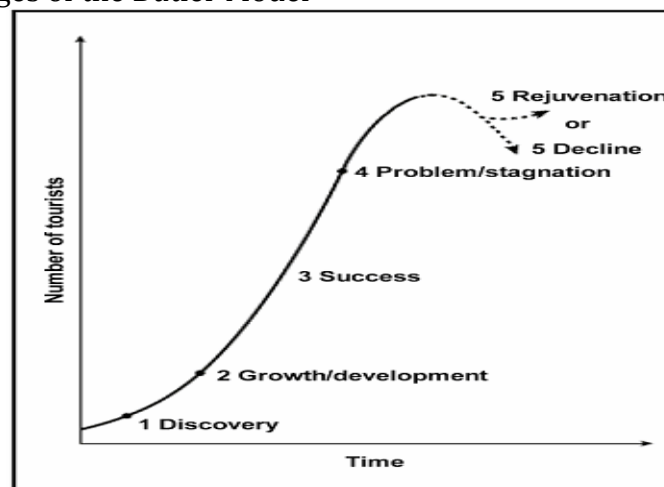


Figure 2: The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Bangladesh (1990 to 2018)

Source: Trending economic, World Bank

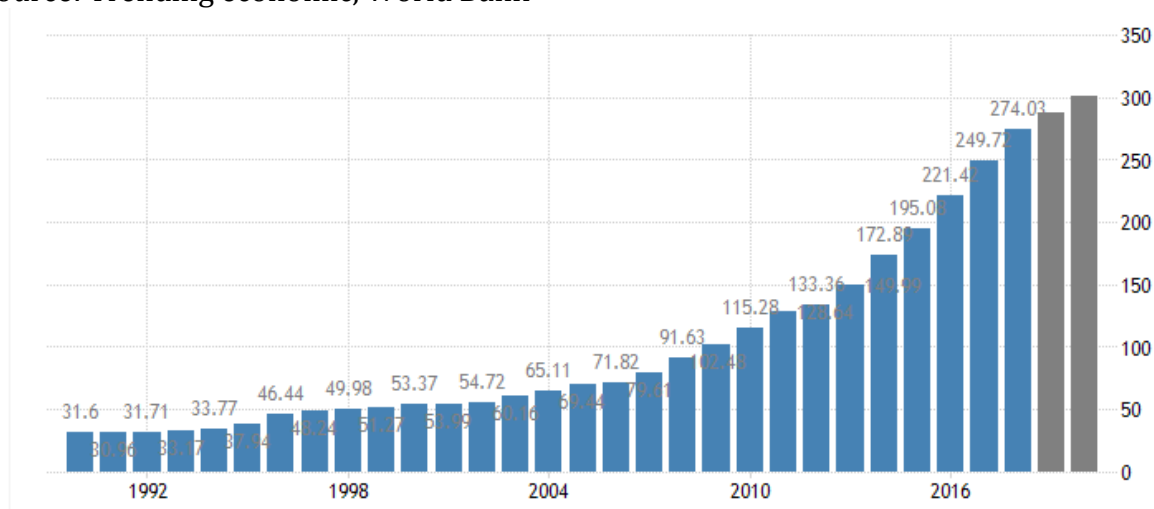
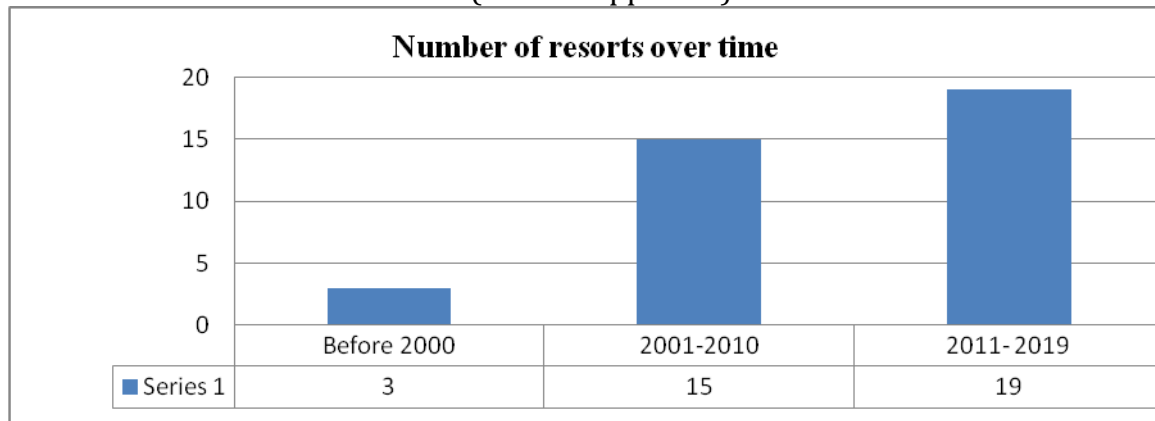


Figure 3: Number of resorts over time (source: Appendix)



### The establishment year of some of the prominent resort of Bangladesh

Resort name	Location	Establishment
Jamuna resort	Dhaka	1995
Abakash resort	Saint martin's	1996
Arunima eco resort	Narail	1999
Elenga resort	Tangail	2001
Blue marine resort	Saint martin's	
Resort Atlantia; Fantasy kingdom	Ashulia	2002
Third terrace resort	Gazipur	2005
Nilgiri resort	Bandarban	
Padma resort	Munshiganj	2007
Mrmaid eco resort	cox's bazar	
Marmaid beach resort	cox's bazar	
Nil digonta Resort	Saint martin's	
Foye's lake resort	Chittagong	2008
Pakshi resort	Pabna	
Panna resort	Saint martin's	
Rangamati waterfront resort	Gazipur	2009
Najimgor garden resort	Sylhet	
Green Tech resort	Gazipur	2010
Nokkhottrobari Resort	Gazipur	2011
Ananda park resort	Gazipur	
Najimgar Wilderness	Sylhet	
Music eco resort	Saint martin's	2012
Green peak resort	Bandarban	
Maya eco resort	sundarban	2013
Grand sultan	Sreemangal	
Sukhtara eco resort	Sylhet	
Panigram resort	Jessor	2014
Dusai Resort	Sreemangal	

Arshi nagar resort	Joydebpur	2015
Sayman resort	cox's bazar	
Ratondip resort	Rajshahi	2016
Sarah Resort	Gazipur	2017
Bhawal Resort	Gazipur	
Rajendra Eco Resort & Village	Gazipur	
The Base Camp	Gazipur	

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