



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Housing and Public Works

Urban Development Directorate

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PREPARATION OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR MEHERPUR ZILLA

REPORT ON ASSIGNMENT-3

Integrated Tourism Development Plan for Meherpur District

December 2025

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Integrated Tourism Development Plan



Urban Development Directorate
Ministry of Housing and Public Works
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Executive Summary

The Integrated Tourism Development Plan for Meherpur District presents a strategic, multi-thematic roadmap to transform Meherpur into a vibrant, sustainable, and rich tourism destination. Building on the district's unique combination of **wetland landscapes, historic sites, religious heritage, and cross-border cultural identity**, this plan proposes an integrated spatial and economic framework that enhances visitor experience while safeguarding environmental and community values.

Meherpur's identity is shaped by its **beel ecosystems**, including Chand Beel, Kutubpur Beel, Bitkamari Beel, Poddo Beel, Tuplar Beel, Chulkani Beel, Teroghoria Lake, and Horirumpur Beel along with nationally important heritage locations such as **Mujibnagar Independence Memorial Complex, Aamjhupi and Vatpara Neelkuthi**, and multiple religious sites and temples. The plan recognizes these diverse assets and organizes them into a coherent, accessible, and economically beneficial tourism network.

At the core of the plan is the creation of a **Beel Tourism Corridor**, linking major beels through an upgraded and climate-resilient transportation system. This corridor integrates ecological conservation, low-impact tourism infrastructure, and rural livelihood enhancement. Beel areas are zoned into

- (1) **Conservation Core Zones**, protecting hydrology and biodiversity.
- (2) **Tourism Service Zones**, with eco-cottages, walkways, viewing decks, craft markets, and interpretation centers; and
- (3) **Agricultural and Transition Zones**, supporting agro-tourism, floriculture, and community enterprises. This zoning ensures environmental protection while allowing controlled tourism growth.

The plan further connects beel-based tourism with cultural and heritage sites through a **multi-thematic tourism circuit**. Chand Beel is proposed as a **primary hotel and accommodation zone**, serving as the gateway for tourists. From there, visitors can access Aamjhupi Neelkuthi, Vatpara Neelkuthi, DC Eco Park, Kutubpur Lake and Temple, Teroghoria Lake, and onward to the Mujibnagar Memorial Complex. Improved wayfinding, district-level branding, and visitor service centers will create a unified tourism experience.

Inclusive local economic development is a guiding principle. The plan encourages **community-based tourism**, promoting local crafts, homestays, traditional agriculture, and small businesses. Through capacity-building and public-private partnership models, the plan aims to generate employment, reduce rural poverty, and empower residents, especially women and youth.

Environmentally, the plan emphasizes **nature-based solutions**, climate-resilient infrastructure, wetland restoration, and sustainable mobility options such as bicycle lanes, pedestrian trails, and electric vehicle access. Socially, it reinforces Meherpur's historical identity and strengthens cultural pride.

Overall, the Integrated Tourism Development Plan envisions Meherpur as a model district where **nature, culture, heritage, and community development** coexist harmoniously. By implementing this plan, Meherpur can position itself as an attractive regional destination, boosting tourism revenue, improving quality of life, and ensuring long-term resilience and sustainability for future generations.

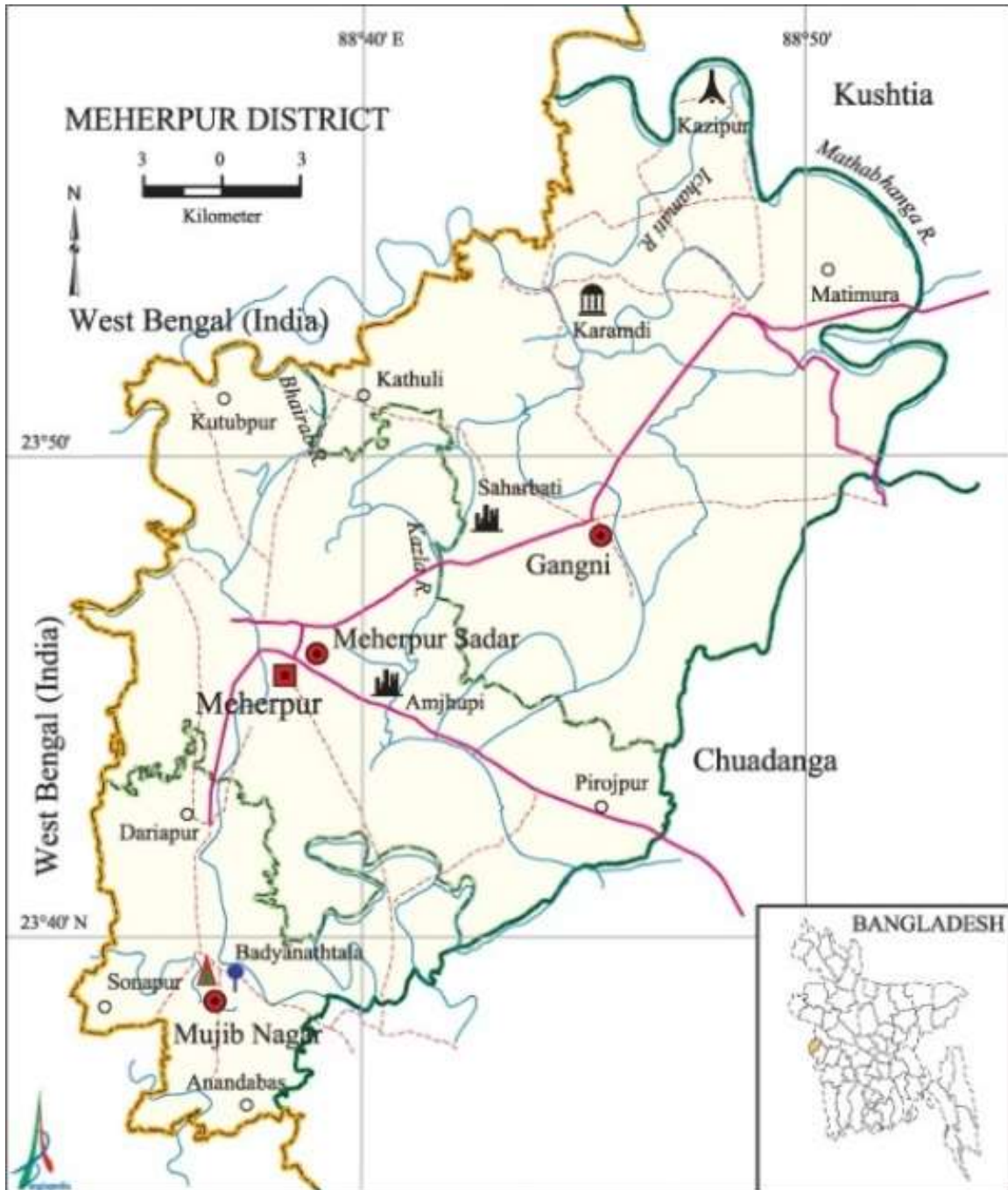


Figure 1 Meherpur District Map

1. Introduction

Meherpur District is situated in the southwestern region of Bangladesh which holds a distinctive identity shaped by its rich natural landscapes, historic significance in the Liberation War, cultural heritage, and vibrant rural life. Despite this unique combination of assets, Meherpur's tourism potential remains largely underdeveloped, mostly limited to local and seasonal visitors. The district's wetlands (beels), archaeological remains, riverine landscapes, and border-centric heritage offer immense opportunity for integrated, sustainable, and community-driven tourism growth.

The Integrated Tourism Development Plan aims to establish a holistic framework for leveraging these resources while ensuring ecological protection, economic inclusiveness, and improved accessibility. This introductory chapter sets the foundation by presenting the background, objectives, methodologies, policy alignment, and a spatial overview of the project area.

1.1 Background and Rationale

Meherpur is nationally recognized for its historical importance; most notably as the location where the Provisional Government of Bangladesh took oath on 17 April 1971 at Mujibnagar. Alongside this heritage, the district is enriched with a mosaic of wetlands such as Chand Beel, Kutubpur Beel, Bitkamari Beel, Poddob Beel, Tuplar Beel, Chulkani Beel, Teroghorla Lake, and Horirampur Beel. These water bodies support ecosystems, fisheries, agriculture, and provide scenic landscapes suitable for low-impact tourism.

However, tourism activities in Meherpur remain fragmented, lacking a coordinated strategy that integrates natural, cultural, and historical attractions. Issues such as limited accommodation, inadequate signage, insufficient transport connection, and minimal community involvement restrict the district's capacity to attract regional or international tourists.

The rationale for an integrated development plan arises from:

- The need to **protect ecological zones** from unplanned growth.
- The opportunity to **connect wetland tourism with heritage circuits**, creating multi-thematic experiences.
- The potential to **generate local employment**, especially for women and youth.
- The importance of **preserving cultural memory** and enhancing visitor interpretation at historic sites.
- The requirement of **better accessibility**, including road upgrades and visitor services.

This integrated approach creates a balanced framework where conservation, community prosperity, and tourism infrastructure grow together.



Figure 2 Aamjhupi Neelkuthi

1.2 Objectives of the Tourism Development Plan

The plan is designed with both development and conservation goals, ensuring long-term resilience and visitor satisfaction. The key objectives include:

1. Strategic Development Objectives

- To formulate a **district-wide tourism vision** aligning natural, cultural, historical, and economic dimensions.
- To establish a **multi-thematic tourism network** linking beels, heritage sites, temples, agro-tourism, and riverfronts.
- To enhance **transportation connectivity** through improved road hierarchy, signage, and last-mile accessibility.

2. Environmental & Conservation Objectives

- To safeguard wetlands and sensitive ecosystems through functional zoning.
- To promote **climate-resilient infrastructure**, green practices, and environmental restoration.

3. Socio-economic Objectives

- To strengthen **community-based tourism** and expand local livelihood opportunities.
- To promote local crafts, agro-tourism, homestays, and youth participation in tourism entrepreneurship.
- To develop a unified **district tourism brand identity**.

4. Governance & Management Objectives

- To facilitate coordinated planning through collaboration among district administration, LGED, RHD, DoE, local communities, and private sector stakeholders.
- To develop a monitoring framework for evaluating tourism impacts and guiding continuous improvement.

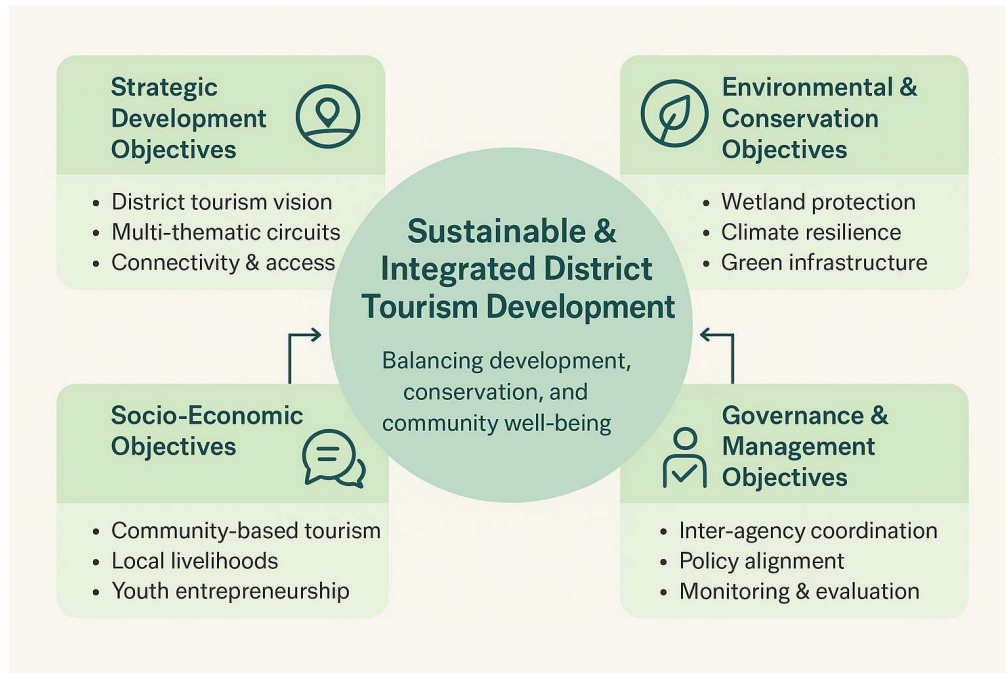


Figure 3 Conceptual Model

1.3 Scope and Methodology

Scope

The scope of the Integrated Tourism Development Plan covers all major natural, cultural, religious, and heritage sites across Meherpur Sadar, Gangni, and Mujibnagar Upazilas. The plan emphasizes:

- Spatial analysis of beels and wetland zones
- Inventory of historic and cultural assets
- Assessment of tourism facilities, services, and mobility
- Community engagement and stakeholder consultation
- Environmental and socio-economic evaluation
- Development of spatial strategies, thematic circuits, and zoning proposals
- Tourism marketing and financial planning

Methodology

The methodology followed mixed qualitative and spatially analytical approaches:

1. **Secondary Data Collection:**
Review of district profiles, LGED/RHD road maps, previous studies, environmental reports, and satellite imagery.
2. **Field Surveys & Observation:**
On-site assessment of beels, Neelkuthi areas, temples, lakes, and border points. Evaluation of road conditions, visitor facilities, and landscape character.
3. **Stakeholder Consultations:**
Engagement with local communities, district officials, tourism entrepreneurs, cultural groups, and conservation bodies.
4. **GIS-Based Mapping:**
Preparation of resource maps, zoning maps, accessibility maps, and tourism corridor networks.
5. **Planning & Design Framework:**
Development of strategies, design guidelines, infrastructure proposals, and implementation pathways.



Figure 4 Methodology Flowchart

1.4 Alignment with National and Regional Policies

The Integrated Tourism Development Plan aligns with national, regional, and sectoral policies, ensuring institutional coherence and long-term viability.

Key national policies are integrated into the plan:

- **Bangladesh Tourism Policy (2023):**
Emphasis on sustainable, nature-based, and heritage-centered tourism.
- **Perspective Plan 2041:**
Highlights tourism as a driver of regional economic development.
- **Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100:**
Encourages climate-resilient land use, wetland conservation, and sustainable water resources.

- **National Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
Supports SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), SDG 14 & 15 (Life Below Water & Life on Land).

Regional and local planning alignment:

- Khulna Division development strategies
- LGED Upazila road network plans
- District-level conservation initiatives
- Mujibnagar Development Master Plan
- Border area development programs

The plan ensures harmony between tourism expansion and broader regional development priorities.

1.5 Study Area Overview

Meherpur District covers approximately 716 km², comprising three upazilas: Meherpur Sadar, Mujibnagar, and Gangni. It is bordered by Chuadanga and Kushtia districts, and the Indian state of West Bengal to the west. The district is characterized by:

- A network of interconnected **beels**, seasonal wetlands, and small rivers
- Agricultural landscapes dominated by paddy, jute, vegetables, sugarcane, and fisheries
- Historic colonial-era structures such as Aamjhupi & Vatpara Neelkuthi
- The iconic **Mujibnagar Memorial Complex**
- Multiple small but spiritually significant temples and shrines
- Expanding urban centers around Meherpur Sadar and Gangni

Geography and socio-cultural fabric create a strong base for nature-based, cultural, and community-driven tourism.

Key Tourism Zones Identified:

- **Wetland & Landscape Zone:** Chad Beel, Teroghoria Lake, Horirumpur Beel, Poddo Beel, Taranagar Chulkanir Beel
- **Heritage Zone:** Aamjhupi Neelkuthi, Vatpara Neelkuthi, Mujibnagar
- **Religious Tourism Zone:** Kutubpur Temple, local shrines, Bhoborpara Church, Roman Catholic Church
- **Urban Recreation Zone:** DC Eco Park, Bhairab Riverfront (proposed)

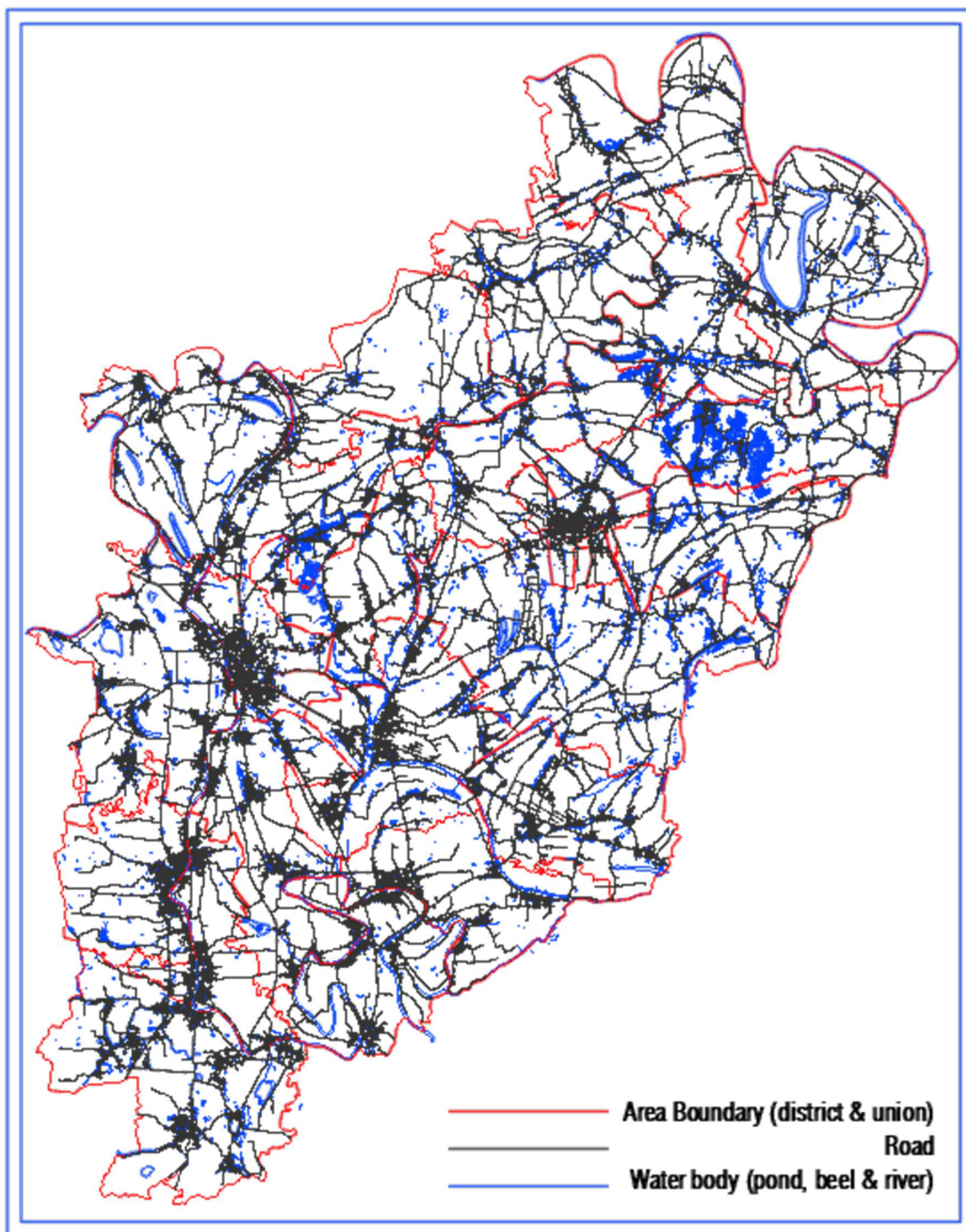


Figure 5 Study Area Map – Upazila Boundaries, Roads, Beels

2. Tourism Vision & Goals

Meherpur District possesses a diverse tourism profile shaped by its ecological richness, agrarian landscapes, Liberation War heritage, colonial-era structures, and border-adjacent cultural identity. Although relatively small, the district contains high tourism potential across multiple themes such as eco-tourism, wetland tourism, cultural heritage, religious tourism, agro-tourism, and cross-border historical experiences.

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the district’s physical, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics along with its current tourism trends. It highlights strengths, opportunities, and constraints that shape the tourism development landscape.

2.1 Geographic and Environmental Context

Meherpur lies in Bangladesh’s south-western region within the Ganges floodplain ecosystem. The district’s environmental character is defined by:

- A network of **seasonal and perennial beels**
- Fertile alluvial soil supporting agriculture
- Gently undulating terrain and village clusters
- Micro-ecosystems supporting birds, fisheries, and aquatic vegetation

The district includes major wetland systems such as Chand Beel, Kutubpur Beel, Bitkamari Beel, Poddoo Beel, Tuplar Beel, Chulkani Beel, Teroghoria Lake, and Horirumpur Beel, which play a crucial role in the ecological and economic life of rural communities. These beels attract migratory birds, especially during winter, offering opportunities for birdwatching, landscape photography, and eco-tourism activities.

The climate is characterized by warm summers, mild winters, and monsoon-dominated rainfall, creating seasonal visual transformations in the landscape—from lush monsoon wetlands to golden agricultural fields during winter harvest.



Figure 6 Seasonal view of Chand beel—monsoon (July) vs. winter (December)

2.2 Socio-economic Characteristics

As a predominantly rural district, Meherpur's economy is driven by:

- Agriculture (paddy, wheat, jute, sugarcane, vegetables)
- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Cross-border trade
- Cottage and handicraft industries
- Government and local services

The district has a high dependency on farming, but seasonal employment scarcity leads many youths to seek work outside the region. A sustainable tourism sector could generate new livelihood opportunities, especially for women, youth, small entrepreneurs, and cultural groups.

Key socio-economic indicators relevant to tourism:

- High literacy rates compared to national rural averages
- Strong cultural identity centered around the 1971 Mujibnagar event
- Growing number of small-scale entrepreneurs in food, crafts, and services
- Community acceptance of tourism-related job opportunities
- Potential for homestay and agro-tourism because of safe villages and hospitable culture

The population's attachment to local heritage and community values sets a strong foundation for **community-based tourism**.



Figure 7 village market (Garbaria Bazaar)

2.3 Historical Evolution of Meherpur's Cultural Landscape

Meherpur's cultural landscape has evolved from centuries of agricultural life, colonial administration, and Liberation War significance. The district's identity is deeply rooted in:

1. **Colonial-era influence:**

- Neelkuthi (indigo factory) sites at **Aamjhupi** and **Vatpara**
- Remnants of brick structures, arches, and colonial planning patterns
These sites, though partially damaged, still hold strong architectural value and storytelling potential.

2. **Liberation War Significance:**

Meherpur is nationally recognized as the birthplace of the **Provisional Government of Bangladesh** in April 1971, making **Mujibnagar Memorial Complex** a central heritage tourism destination.

3. **Border Culture:**

Being adjacent to India influences the district's language, architecture, cuisine, crafts, and trade, enriching the cultural tourism narrative.

4. **Folk traditions:**

- Baul song traditions
- Village fairs, rituals, and harvest festivals
- Indigenous food traditions and local storytelling

These diverse historical layers contribute to a rich cultural tourism offering.



Figure 8 Mujibnagar Memorial Complex



Figure 9 Aamjhupi Neelkuthi

2.4 Existing Tourism Activities and Visitor Trends

Tourism in Meherpur remains largely **unstructured and seasonal**, with visitors typically being domestic travelers, school groups, and district-level tourists. The main attractions currently draw visitors include:

Heritage Tourism

- Mujibnagar Memorial Complex
- Aamjhupi & Vatpara Neelkuthi
- Old Houses at Meherpur Sadar

Nature & Wetland Tourism

- Chad Beel, Teroghorla Lake, Horirumpur Beel
- Seasonal birdwatching
- Casual photography & picnicking

Religious Tourism

- Kutubpur Temple, Bhorpara Roman Catholic Church, Bollovpur Church,
- Local shrines and heritage mosques

Urban Recreation

- DC Eco Park
- Proposed Bhairab Riverfront (future)

Key visitor trends

- Peak seasons: **winter (Nov–Feb)** for beel tourism and heritage visits.
- Summer visits are limited except for heritage and local events.
- Lack of accommodation facilities restricts overnight stays.
- Visitors often come for **day trips** from Kushtia, Chuadanga, & Jashore.
- Limited marketing or branding reduces visibility.

Despite significant assets, Meherpur has yet to establish itself as a major tourism destination due to gaps in infrastructure, accessibility, and coordination.

2.5 SWOT Analysis of Meherpur Tourism Sector

A detailed SWOT analysis helps identify internal capacities and external conditions, shaping the district's tourism potential.

Strengths

- Rich ecological assets with multiple beels
- Strong historical significance, especially Liberation War heritage
- Unique colonial-era structures (Neelkuthi)
- Safe, peaceful rural environment
- Proximity to India enhances cross-border tourism potential
- Hospitable communities suitable for homestay models
- Distinct folk culture and agro-based attractions

Weaknesses

- Limited hotel and accommodation options
- Poor signage, branding, and visitor information
- Low-quality internal roads to natural sites
- Lack of trained tourism workforce
- Heritage sites require restoration
- Wetland areas lack boardwalks, jetties, and safety features
- No consolidated tourism authority or management system

Opportunities

- Beel Tourism Corridor can create a new identity
- Eco-tourism and birdwatching demand is rising
- Heritage restoration can attract national visitors
- Community-based tourism can diversify rural income
- Riverfront development can boost urban recreation
- Cycling trails and NMT paths can attract youth and eco-tourists
- Cross-border cultural circuits with West Bengal

Threats

- Unplanned land use and encroachment near beels
- Environmental degradation or water pollution
- Climate change impacts on wetland hydrology
- Commercialization without community benefit
- Loss of historical structures if not restored
- Overcrowding during peak seasons without management

3. Tourism Resource Inventory

Name	Type	Location	Condition	Access	Value	Priority
Chand Beel	Natural	Aamjhupi	Fair	Poor	High	High
Teroghoria Lake	Natural	Teroghoria	Poor	Poor	High	Medium
Harirumpur Beel	Natural	Harirumpur	Poor	Poor	Local	Low
Paddmo Beel	Natural	Taranagar	Poor	Poor	Local	Low
Tuplar Beel	Natural	Taranagar	Poor	Poor	Local	Low
Aamjhupi Neelkuthi	Heritage	Aamjhupi	Fair	Good	National	High
Vatpara Neelkuthi	Heritage	Amjhupi	Poor	Fair	Local	Medium
Mujibnagar Memorial Complex	Heritage	Mujibnagar	Fair	Good	National	Medium
Bongo Agro Complex	Agro	Jugirgofa	Fair	Poor	National	Low
Bumundi Cow Hut	Agro	Bumundi	Poor	Fair	National	Medium
Bhairab Riverfront	Leisure	Meherpur Sadar	Non existing	Poor	Local	Medium
Boro Bazar Road	Leisure	Meherpur Sadar	Poor	Good	High	High
College Road	Leisure	Meherpur Sadar	Non existing	Good	High	Medium

The Tourism Resource Inventory provides a comprehensive assessment of the natural, cultural, historical, and socio-economic assets of Meherpur District. It forms the foundation for spatial planning, thematic circuit development, and investment prioritization. By identifying and categorizing resources, this chapter helps understand the district's tourism potential and the constraints that must be addressed to guide sustainable development.

3.1 Natural Attractions

Meherpur's natural landscape is dominated by wetlands (beels), agricultural plains, and river-adjacent areas. These environments offer opportunities for eco-tourism, landscape tourism, educational visits, birdwatching, and recreation.

A. Major Beels and Wetland Systems

1. Chand Beel

A seasonally dynamic wetland with calm reflections, fishing activities, bird colony and rich aquatic vegetation.

Potential: Viewing decks, seasonal festivals, birdwatching zones.

2. Teroghoria Lake Beel

A semi-developed natural lake attracting local visitors.

Potential: Lakeside walkways, picnic facilities, paddle boating, floating deck, bird watching tower.

3. Harirampur Beel

A underdeveloped natural lake attracting local visitors.

Potential: Lakeside walkways, agro tourism, paddle boating, floating deck.

4. Paddmo Beel

A underdeveloped natural lake attracting local visitors, water lily, fishing activities, bird colony and rich aquatic, surrounding by villages.

Potential: Lakeside walkways, eco-tourism, paddle boating, floating deck, bird watching tower.

5. Tuplar Beel

A underdeveloped natural lake attracting local visitors, fishing activities, bird colony and rich aquatic.

Potential: Lakeside walkways, eco-tourism, paddle boating, floating deck, bird watching tower.

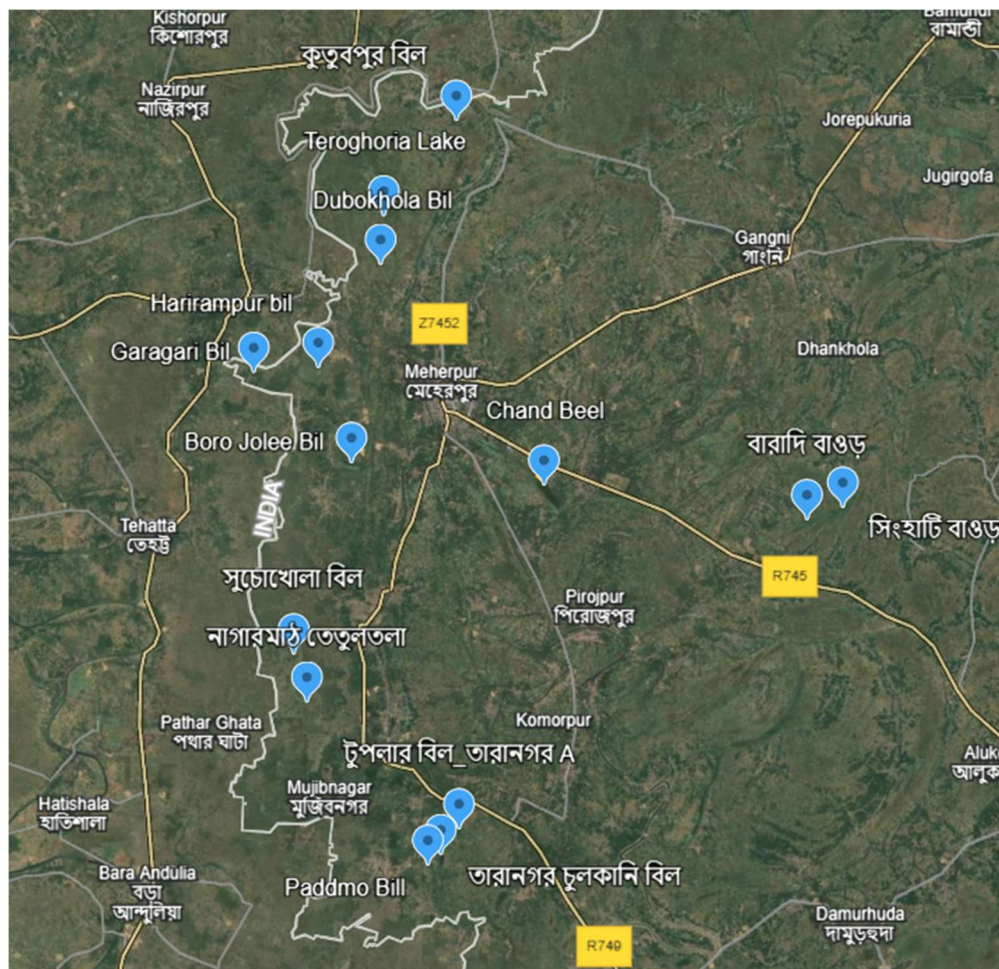


Figure 10 Wetland & Beel Inventory Map



Figure 11 Paddmo Beel



Figure 12 Tuplar Beel



Figure 13 Harirampur Beel



Figure 14 Teroghoria Lake



Figure 15 Chand Beel



Figure 16 Shinghati Baor



Figure 17 Baradi Baor



Figure 18 Boro Jolee Beel

B. Rivers, Canals, and Agricultural Landscapes

Although Meherpur does not have major perennial rivers flowing through the central district, its network of small canals and seasonal floodplains contribute to landscape quality. The **Bhairab Riverfront & Kajla Riverfront** (proposed for development) offers future potential as an urban recreational zone.

Agricultural fields—including sugarcane, paddy, jute, fruit orchards, and flower plots—form attractive rural scenery suitable for **agro-tourism**, photography tours, and village trails.



Figure 19 Bhairab river



Figure 20 Agricultural field panorama

C. Biodiversity and Eco-Tourism Assets

- Birds' colony at Horirumpur, Teroghoria, Tuplar and Chand Beel
- Indigenous fish species
- Water lilies, lotus fields
- Village tree canopies and bamboo clusters
- Wetland ecological diversity

These assets create opportunities for **nature interpretation centers, eco-trails, and environmental education programs.**



Figure 21 Bird colony in beels

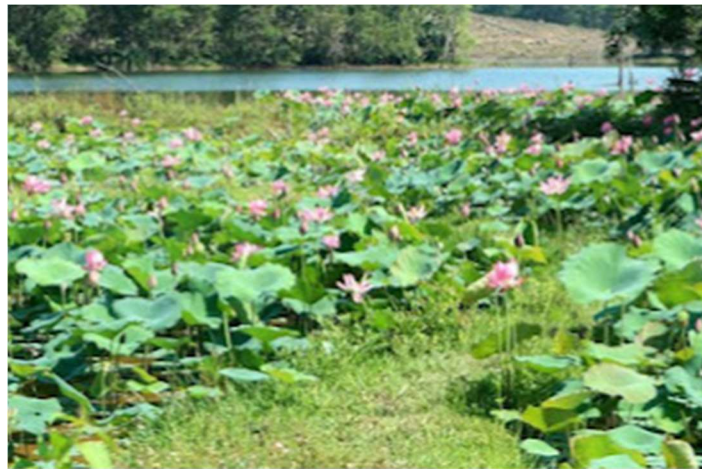


Figure 22 Beel vegetation

3.2 Historical and Cultural Sites

Meherpur's heritage includes Liberation War history, colonial indigo factory complexes, and culturally significant borders. These resources are central to thematic tourism circuits.

A. Aamjhupi Neelkuthi (Indigo Factory Complex)

One of the most historically significant colonial-era indigo structures.

Features: Colonial structure, extensive open area.

Potential: Heritage Museum, café, event space, riverfront promenade, light and acoustic show.



Figure 23 Aamjhupi neelkuthi

B. Vatpara Neelkuthi

Features: Colonial structure, arched façade, old brick masonry, extensive open area.

Potential: Conservation-based restoration, craft market, interpretive signage.



Figure 24 Vatpara neelkuthi

C. Mujibnagar Independence Memorial Complex

The most iconic historical site in the district, marking the formation of Bangladesh's provisional government on April 17, 1971.

Features: Symbolic monuments, landscaped areas, historical museum, parade grounds.

Potential: Exhibition expansions, guided tours, school programs.



Figure 25 Mujibnagar Memorial

D. Other Cultural Assets

- Folk music heritage (Baul songs, rural performances)
- Local festivals and mela traditions
- Traditional food culture and rural celebrations

These assets can support evening cultural programs, craft bazaars, and culinary tourism events.

3.3 Religious Tourism Sites

Religious structures and faith-based traditions in Meherpur contribute to spiritual tourism and cultural identity.

A. Kutubpur Temple

A historic temple with strong community significance.

Potential: Temple plaza improvement, spiritual circuits, festival-based tourism.

B. Local Shrines & Mosques

Meherpur contains numerous small shrines and heritage mosques that hold cultural and architectural value.

Potential: Heritage walk routes, preservation support.

C. Religious Festivals

- Durga Puja gatherings
- Shrine-based rituals
- Local annual celebrations

These can be tied into cultural tourism calendars.



Figure 26 Kutubpur Temple

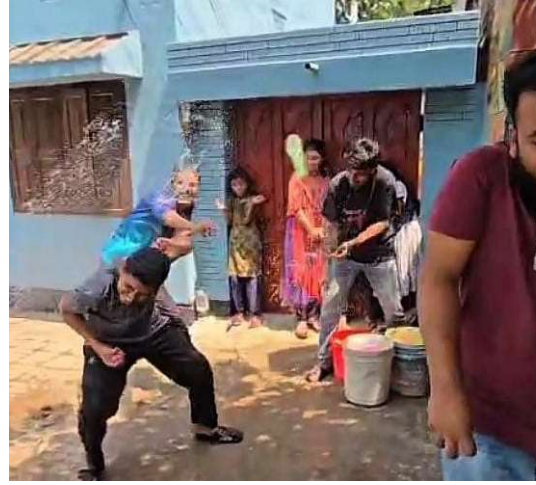


Figure 27 Local Water Festival

3.4 Community Resources and Local Crafts

Local communities are central to tourism sustainability. Meherpur's rural settlements offer rich cultural expressions that can be integrated into tourism activities.

A. Local Handicrafts

- Clay pottery
- Bamboo and cane products
- Traditional weaving

These can expand into **community-run craft markets** within Neelkuthi zones or beel service areas.

B. Agro-Tourism Livelihoods

- Rice–fish integrated farming
- Fruit orchards (mango, guava, litchi)
- Winter vegetable fields

Tourists can engage in farm visits, produce tasting, and crop-cycle interpretation tours.

C. Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Opportunities

- Homestays in safe rural neighborhoods
- Village cooking classes
- Guided storytelling walks

- Local transport experiences (van, boat tours)

CBT strengthens ownership and inclusiveness in tourism development.



Figure 28 Bongo Agro Complex

3.5 Tourism Infrastructure Status (Baseline Overview)

Although Meherpur has strong resource potential, tourism infrastructure remains minimal or unevenly distributed. Major gaps observed during the resource inventory include:

Strengths

- Accessible district roads (RHD & LGED)
- Existing DC Eco Park
- Local markets supporting food and crafts

Gaps / Needs

- Lack of quality hotels (opportunity for Aamjhupi zone)
- Limited toilets, seating areas, viewing platforms
- Poor signage and trail markers
- No structured jetty points in beels
- Insufficient waste management at popular sites
- Limited safety regulations for wetland areas

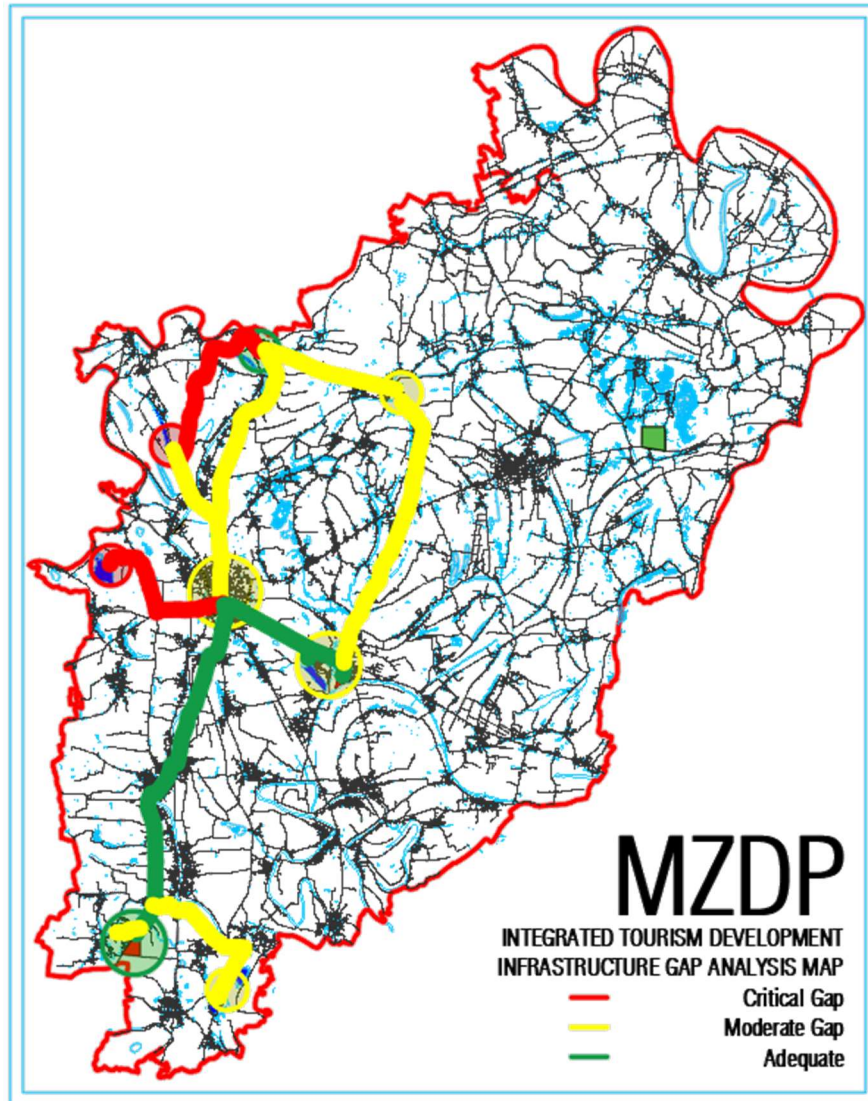


Figure 29 Infrastructure Gap Analysis Map

3.6 Summary of Tourism Resource Potential

Meherpur's tourism resource base suggests high potential across:

- **Eco-tourism:** Wetlands, migratory birds, nature trails
- **Heritage tourism:** Neelkuthi, Mujibnagar, colonial remains
- **Cultural tourism:** Folk traditions, festivals, crafts
- **Agro-tourism:** Village farming, orchards, rural landscapes
- **Urban recreation:** Riverfront development opportunities

This diverse mix forms the backbone for a **multi-thematic tourism circuit**, which will be developed in the next chapters.

4. Spatial Analysis and Strategy

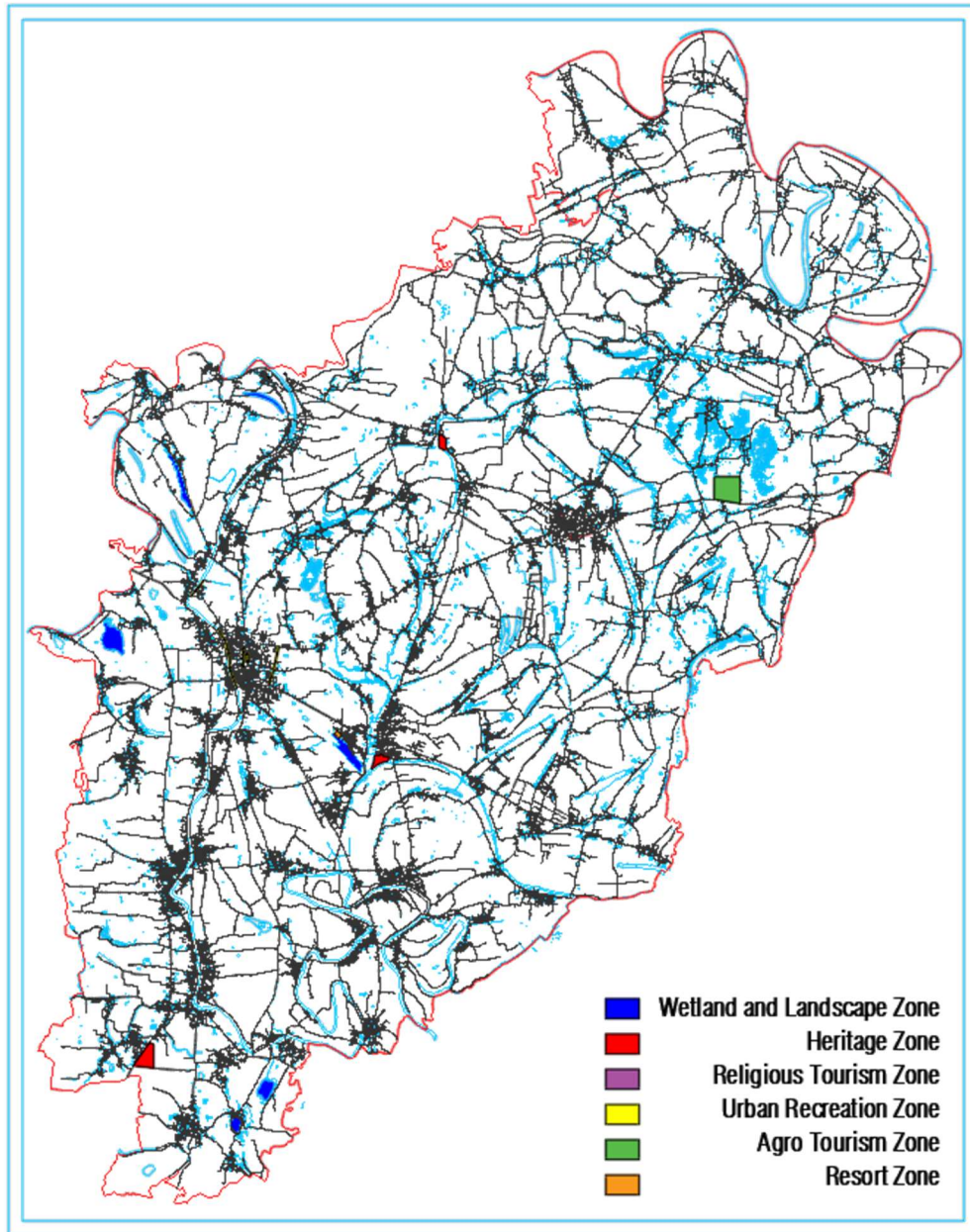


Figure 30 Tourism Resource Inventory Map

The spatial development strategy for Meherpur District integrates environmental conservation, tourism potential, and transport connectivity into a holistic framework. This chapter examines spatial patterns, ecological systems, accessibility networks, and heritage clusters to identify priority tourism zones and guide structured development interventions. Building on the concept of the **Beel Tourism Corridor**, the strategy aims to ensure balanced growth, environmental stewardship, and spatial cohesion across the district.

4.1 Spatial Character of the District

Meherpur presents a compact yet diverse spatial character shaped by:

- Seasonal and perennial **beels** concentrated around rural settlements
- Agricultural plains that dominate the middle belt of the district
- Heritage structures (Neelkuthis) located besides kajla river
- The historic and symbolic landscape of **Mujibnagar** in the southeast
- The emerging urban growth centers of **Meherpur Sadar** and **Gangni**

Key Spatial Observations

1. **Wetlands cluster predominantly in the north-western and southern parts** surrounding villages, creating natural eco-tourism zones.
2. **Heritage nodes form a western-central axis**, linking Neelkuthi complexes with Mujibnagar Memorial.
3. **Agricultural belts** support agro-tourism and scenic rural trails.
4. **Border points** add a unique cultural and geopolitical tourism dimension.
5. **Urban nodes** serve as service hubs for accommodation, transport, and visitor facilities.



Figure 31 Landscape character photo – wetland + village clusters

4.2 Proposed Spatial Framework (Ecology–Tourism–Accessibility)

The spatial framework consists of **three interdependent layers**, ensuring ecological safety, visitor access, and balanced land use:

A. Ecological Conservation Layer

- Protect beels, wetland biodiversity, and natural floodplains.
- Defines **Conservation Core Zones** with buffers (100–500m).
- Restricts heavy infrastructure; allows low-impact, seasonal structures.
- Promotes wetland restoration and natural vegetation strengthening.

B. Tourism and Recreation Infrastructure Layer

- Identifies tourism nodes and service centers.
- Integrates viewing decks, walkways, eco-cottages, platforms, jetty stations, cultural plazas, and interpretation centers.
- Follows vernacular architectural styles and climate-responsive design.
- Ensures tourism does not disrupt agricultural livelihood systems.

C. Accessibility and Connectivity Layer

- Establishes a hierarchical network of roads, NMT lanes, pedestrian trails, and water routes.
- Prioritizes last-mile access for beel areas and heritage nodes.
- Enhances visitor flow between the district’s main tourism clusters.

This tripartite system forms the basis of the **Integrated Tourism Spatial Plan**, balancing protection with development.

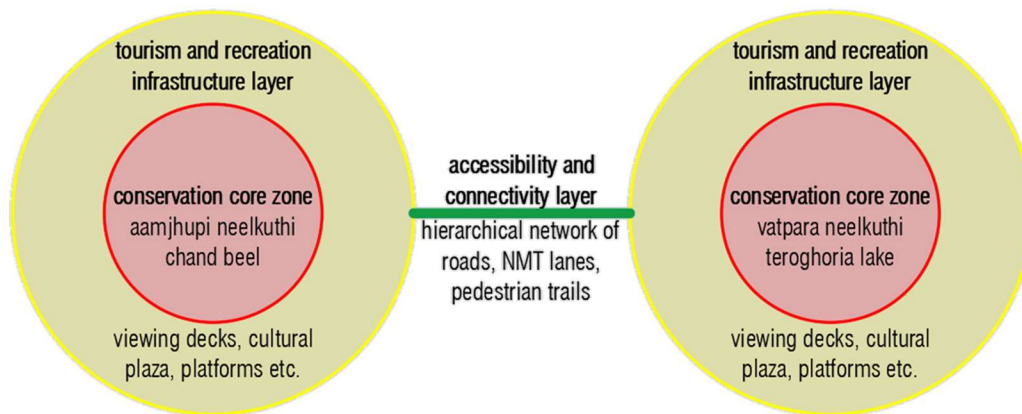


Figure 32 Three-Layer Spatial Framework

4.3 Beel Tourism Corridor: Concept and Structure

Based on your uploaded file **Beel Tourism Corridor**, the strategy identifies a connected network of major beels to form a **north–south eco-tourism corridor**, integrating natural attractions with heritage, cultural, and village tourism.

Corridor Structure

- **Northern Cluster:** Kutubpur Beel, Teroghoria Lake, Harirumpur Beel
- **Central Cluster:** Chand Beel, Bhairab River, Kajla River
- **Southern Cluster:** Tuplar Beel, Paddmo Beel, Taranagar Chulkanir Beel

This corridor ensures each beel lies within **20–30 minutes of an upazila center**, facilitating easy multi-stop day tours or themed eco-tourist expeditions.

Core Components

1. Conservation Core Zones

- Protect natural water bodies
- Restrict construction
- Allow birdwatching, walkways, floating platforms, watch towers

2. Tourism Service Zones

- Visitor centers
- Rest areas, washrooms
- Local craft markets
- Observation decks, small eco-cottages
- Raised plinth design to handle monsoon flooding

3. Agricultural/Transition Zones

- Agro-tourism (rice–fish culture, flower farming)
- Community homestays
- Visual buffer between tourism and rural settlements

Connectivity Vision

- Upgraded rural roads connecting beels to main regional highways
- Dedicated **bicycle routes** linking adjacent beels
- Viewing points at scenic bends
- Branding of corridor with unified signage, identity markers

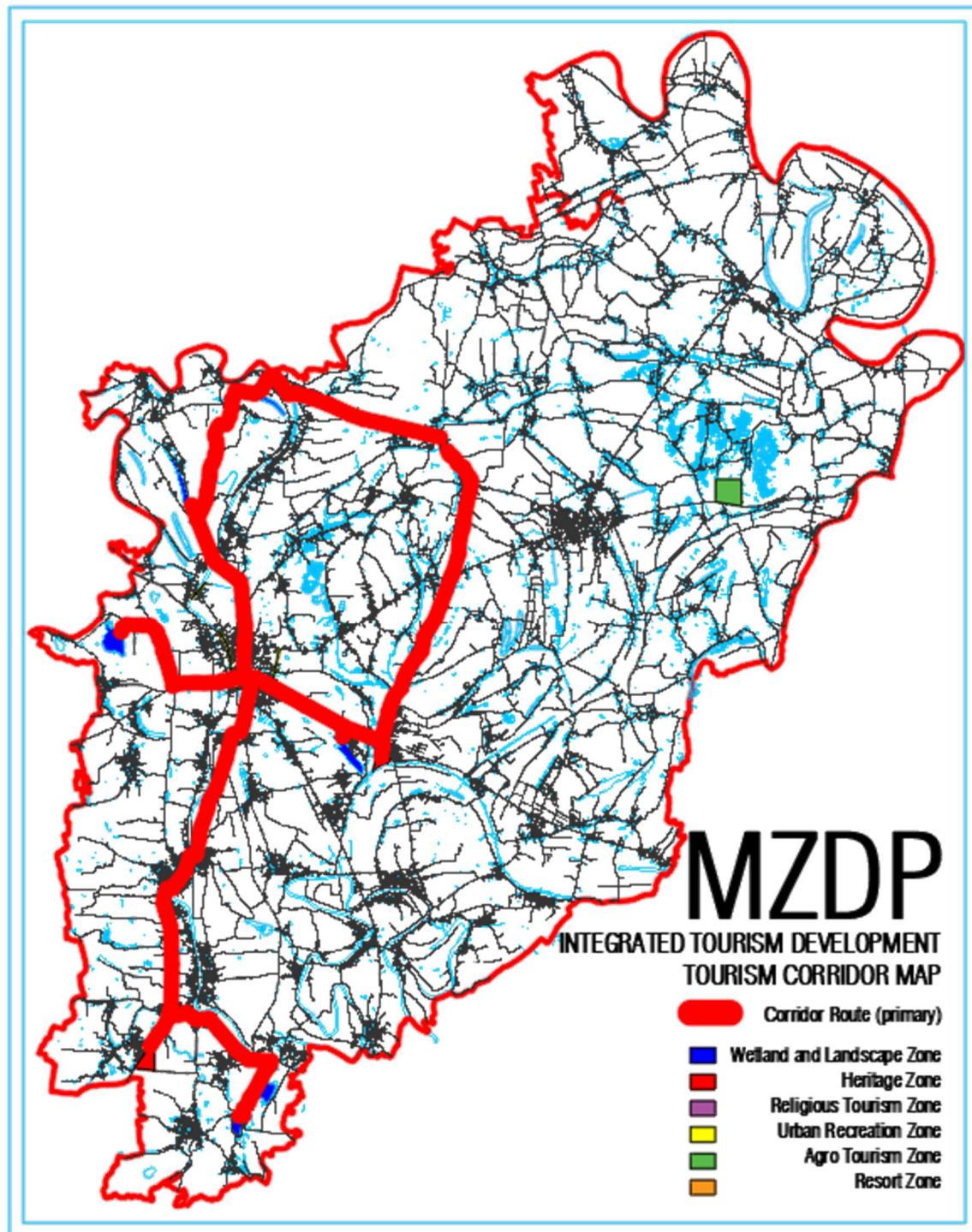


Figure 33 Proposed Beel Tourism Corridor Map

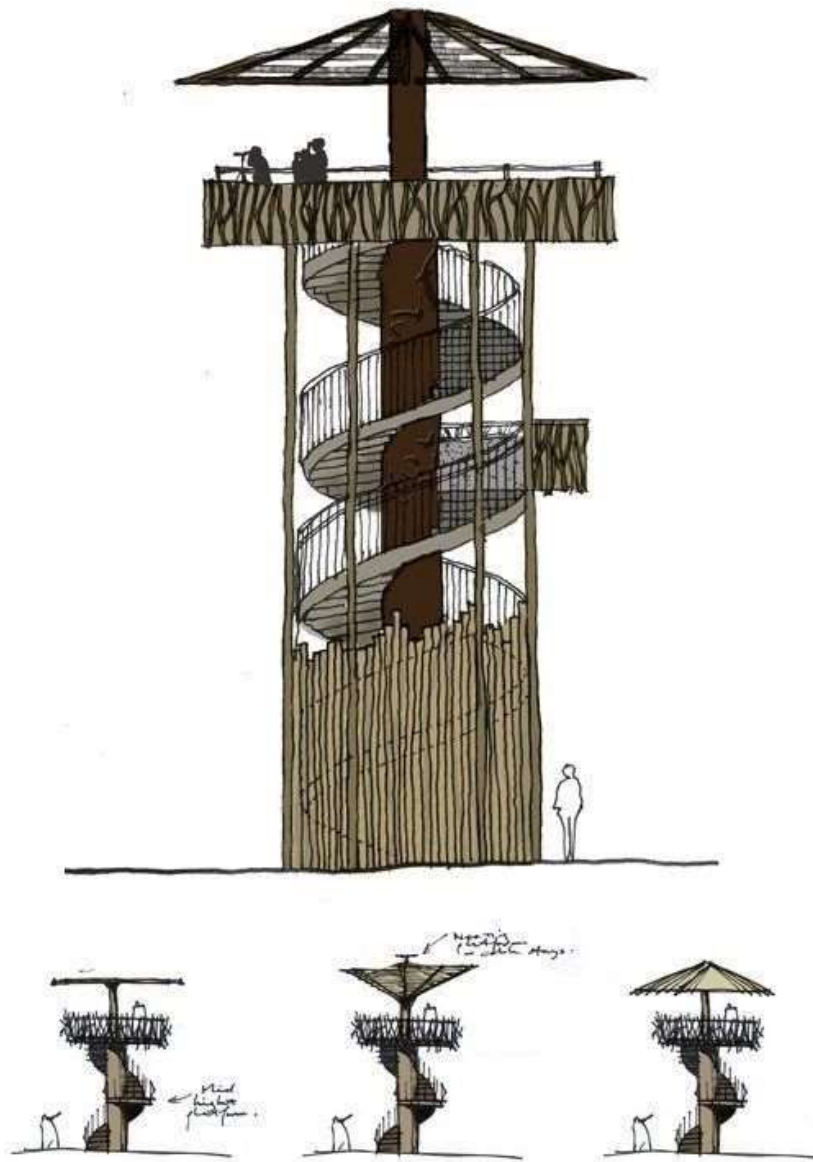


Figure 34 Example of eco-friendly birdwatch tower

4.4 Functional Zoning for Wetland Tourism

To protect ecological integrity and guide tourism development, the plan introduces a functional zoning system:

A. Conservation Core Zone

- High-sensitivity wetland area
- Activities: birdwatching, scientific research, nature trails
- Prohibited: permanent buildings, mechanized watercraft, embankment modification

B. Tourism Service Zone

- Low-impact facilities placed 50–150m from water bodies
- Structures follow local vernacular architecture
- Uses: eco-cottages, interpretation centers, jetty points, kiosks

C. Transition & Agricultural Zone

- Integrates agriculture, floriculture, aquaculture
- Encourages agro-tourism and seasonal festivals
- Creates natural buffer preventing habitat disturbance

This zoning guarantees that tourism enhances, rather than harms, wetland ecosystems.



Figure 35 Functional Zoning Cross-Section of Beel Edge

4.5 Integration with Urban Growth and Transport Networks

Tourists typically enter Meherpur from major gateways such as:

- Kushtia
- Chuadanga
- Proposed Meherpur rail station (future)

The spatial strategy connects these gateways to primary tourism nodes.

A. Regional & District Roads (Primary Access)

- R745: Meherpur–Kushtia Highway
- R745: Meherpur–Chuadanga Highway
- Standard: 7–7.5m carriageway, 1m shoulders
- Upgrades required for consistent pavement and signage

B. Collector Roads (Secondary Access)

- Link regional roads to beels and heritage nodes
- Standard: 6m paved road with proper drains

C. Local Roads & Trails (Last-Mile Access)

- Narrow paved lanes (3–5m) connecting villages to beels
- Pedestrian and NMT trails near water bodies
- Bicycle rental spots at major nodes

D. Water-Based Access (Seasonal)

- Seasonal boat routes in monsoon
- Floating jetty points in deeper beels

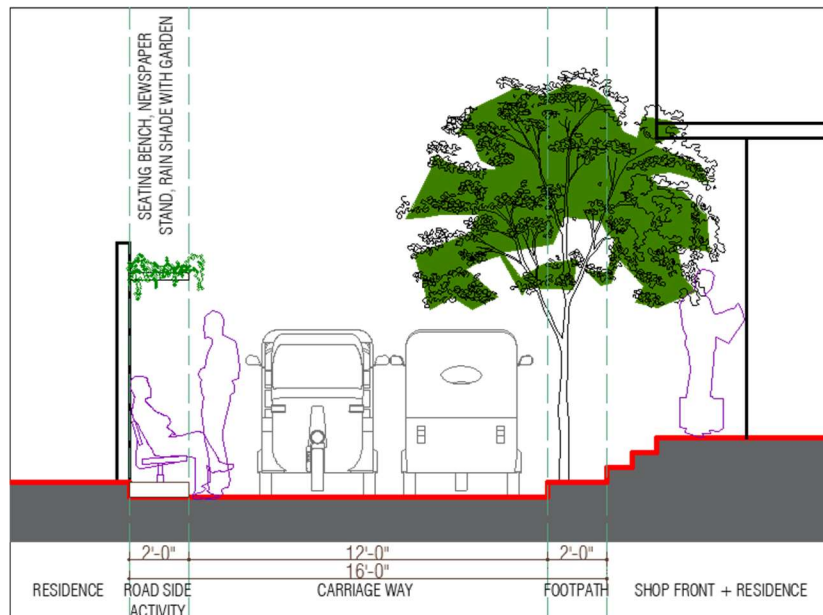


Figure 36 Example NMT path

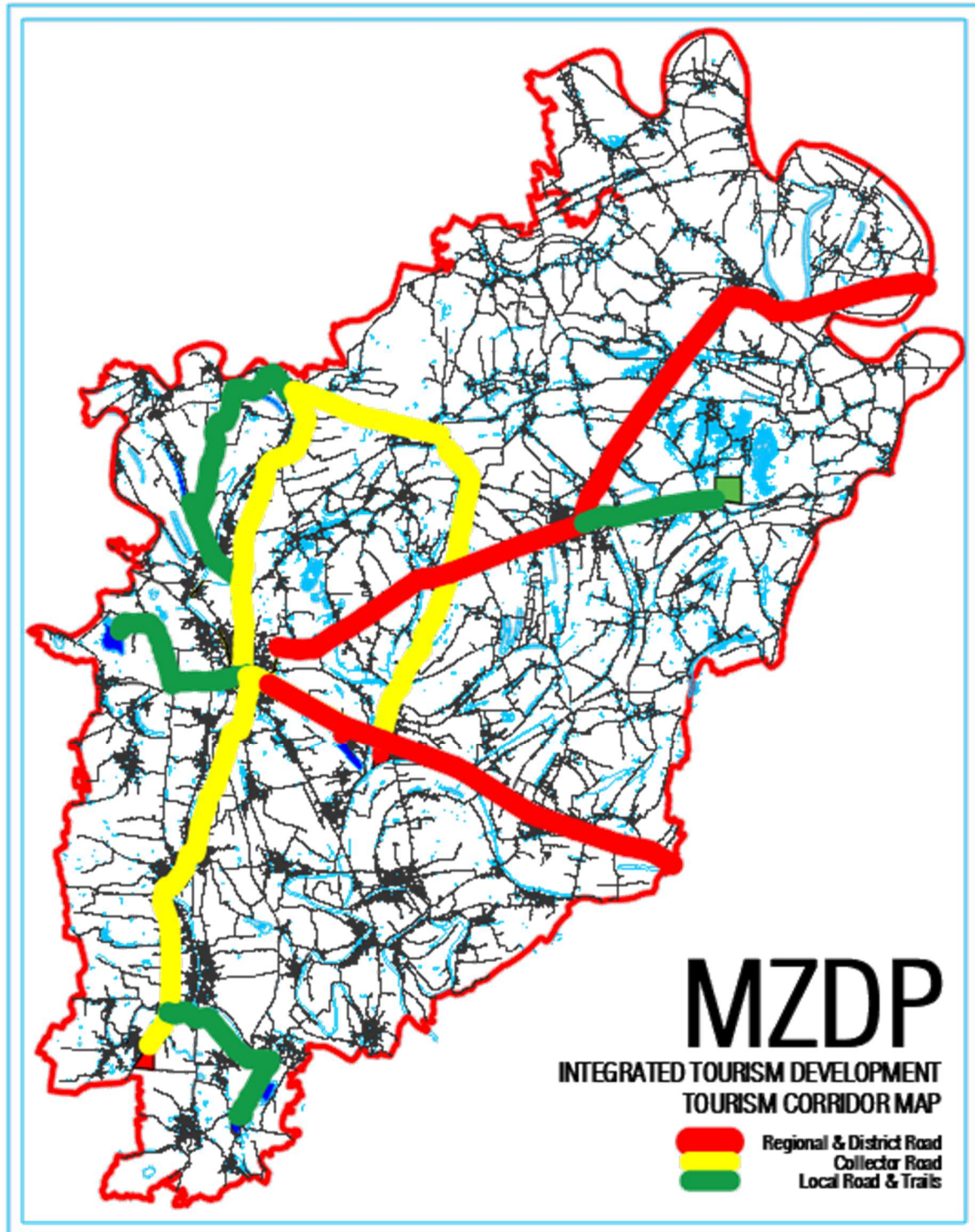


Figure 37 Tourism Connectivity & Hierarchical Road Network

4.6 Regional Connectivity & Cross-Border Linkages

Meherpur's location near the West Bengal border creates unique potential for:

- Cross-border cultural circuits
- Heritage exchange programs
- Border-viewing tourism
- Folk performance events
- Joint craft markets

Potential regional circuit:

Kushtia (Lalon) → Meherpur (Mujibnagar, Neelkuthi) → Chuadanga → India (Nadia District)



Figure 38 Lathi Khela in Meherpur

4.7 Spatial Integration with Other Attractions

The tourism spatial strategy connects nature, culture, and urban recreation through thematic clusters:

A. Heritage Cluster

- Aamjhupi Neelkuthi
- Vatpara Neelkuthi
- Mujibnagar Memorial Complex

B. Eco-Tourism Cluster

- All major beels
- Birdwatching stations
- Wetland boardwalks

C. Religious Cluster

- Kutubpur Temple
- Shrines & mosques

D. Urban Recreation Cluster

- DC Eco Park
- Proposed Bhairab Riverfront
- Festival grounds and food street

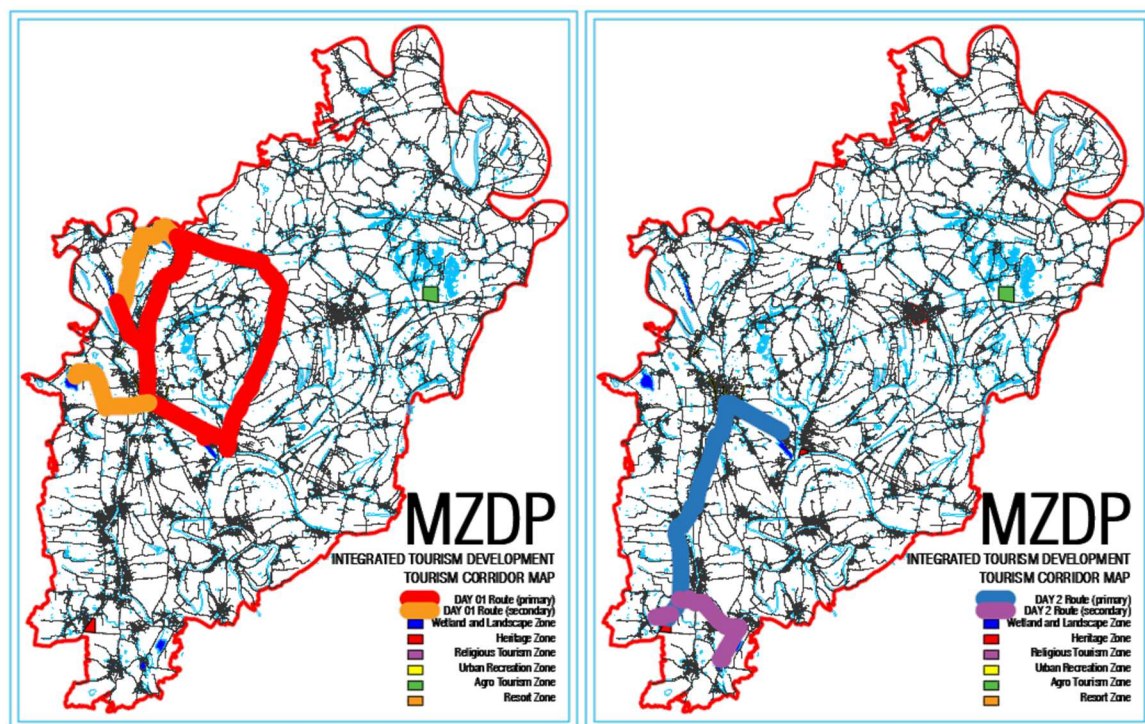


Figure 39 Combined Spatial Integration Map – all clusters

5. Integrated Tourism Development Plan

The Integrated Tourism Development Plan for Meherpur District proposes a unified, multi-thematic, and environmentally responsible approach to tourism development. It builds on the district's unique blend of natural landscapes, historical heritage, religious significance, and rural cultural identity. This plan outlines the vision, thematic circuits, priority tourism nodes, infrastructure proposals, accommodation strategies, and design interventions necessary to transform Meherpur into a cohesive and attractive tourism destination.

5.1 Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles

Vision Statement

To develop Meherpur as a sustainable, culturally vibrant, and nature-centered tourism district that preserves its wetlands and heritage assets while promoting inclusive economic opportunities for local communities.

Strategic Goals

1. **Strengthen Meherpur's identity** as an eco-cultural tourism destination by promoting beel-based tourism, heritage preservation, and border heritage experiences.
2. **Enhance connectivity** and visitor accessibility across all tourism clusters with climate-resilient infrastructure.
3. **Promote community-based tourism** to generate local employment and strengthen cultural pride.
4. **Ensure environmental sustainability** through conservation zoning, wetland restoration, and low-impact design practices.
5. **Develop a strong tourism brand** through strategic marketing, information systems, and visual identity.

Guiding Principles

- *Conservation-first development*
- *Community participation and benefit-sharing*
- *Authenticity and heritage sensitivity*
- *Inclusivity and accessibility*
- *Climate resilience and ecological safety*
- *Low-impact tourism infrastructure*

5.2 Thematic Tourist Circuits

The plan introduces **four major circuits**, each with its own attractions, experience types, and interpretation themes. Visitors may choose single circuits or combined multi-day routes.

1. Beel & Eco-Tourism Circuit

(Chad Beel → Teroghoria Lake → Harirumpur Beel → Tuplar Beel → Paddmo Beel)

Experience Themes:

- Birdwatching
- Wetland ecology
- Village walks
- Agro-tourism
- Photography & scenic views

Key Proposed Facilities:

- Wetland observation towers
- Boardwalks and bamboo walkways
- Floating decks and jetty points
- Eco-cottages managed by communities
- Cycling routes

2. Heritage & Neelkuthi Circuit

(Aamjhupi Neelkuthi → Vatpara Neelkuthi → Meherpur Sadar Heritage Walk → Mujibnagar Memorial Complex)

Experience Themes:

- Colonial history (Indigo plantations)
- Local architectural heritage
- Lifestyle & cultural stories

Proposed Facilities:

- Conservation of Neelkuthi structures
- Heritage museum/gallery
- Craft bazaar
- Guided interpretive walks
- Light-and-sound show at Aamjhupi

3. Religious & Cultural Circuit

(Kutubpur Temple → Meherpur Sadar Shrines → Local festival plazas → Mujibnagar Churches)

Experience Themes:

- Spiritual experiences
- Festival tourism
- Folk performances

Proposed Facilities:

- Temple plaza redesign
- Pathways and ritual space improvement
- Cultural performance pavilion

4. Freedom Trail Circuit

(Mujibnagar Memorial → Cultural Heritage Route)

Experience Themes:

- 1971 Liberation story
- Cross-border cultural linkages
- Historical interpretation

Proposed Facilities:

- Border-viewing pavilion
- Freedom Trail signage
- Expanded exhibits at Mujibnagar



Figure 40 Example Heritage Circuit Signage



Figure 41 Example Heritage Route Marker

5.3 Proposed Tourism Nodes and Facilities

The development of key nodes ensures that tourism services are distributed and accessible throughout the district.

A. Primary Tourism Nodes (High Priority)

1. Mujibnagar Memorial Complex

- Upgraded museum, digital displays, guided tours
- Improved parking and visitor rest area

2. Aamjhupi Neelkuthi Tourism Zone

- Hotel accommodation hub
- Cultural plaza
- Heritage interpretation center

3. Chad Beel & Teroghoria Beel Nodes

- Iconic landscape views
- Observation platforms, eco-cottages

B. Secondary Tourism Nodes

- Harirampur Beel Waterfront
- Poddo Beel access point
- DC Eco Park
- Kutubpur Temple Cluster
- Mujibnagar Church Cluster

C. Tertiary Nodes (Community-based)

- Village craft clusters
- Agro-tourism farms
- Homestay communities in Horirampur and Aamjhupi villages

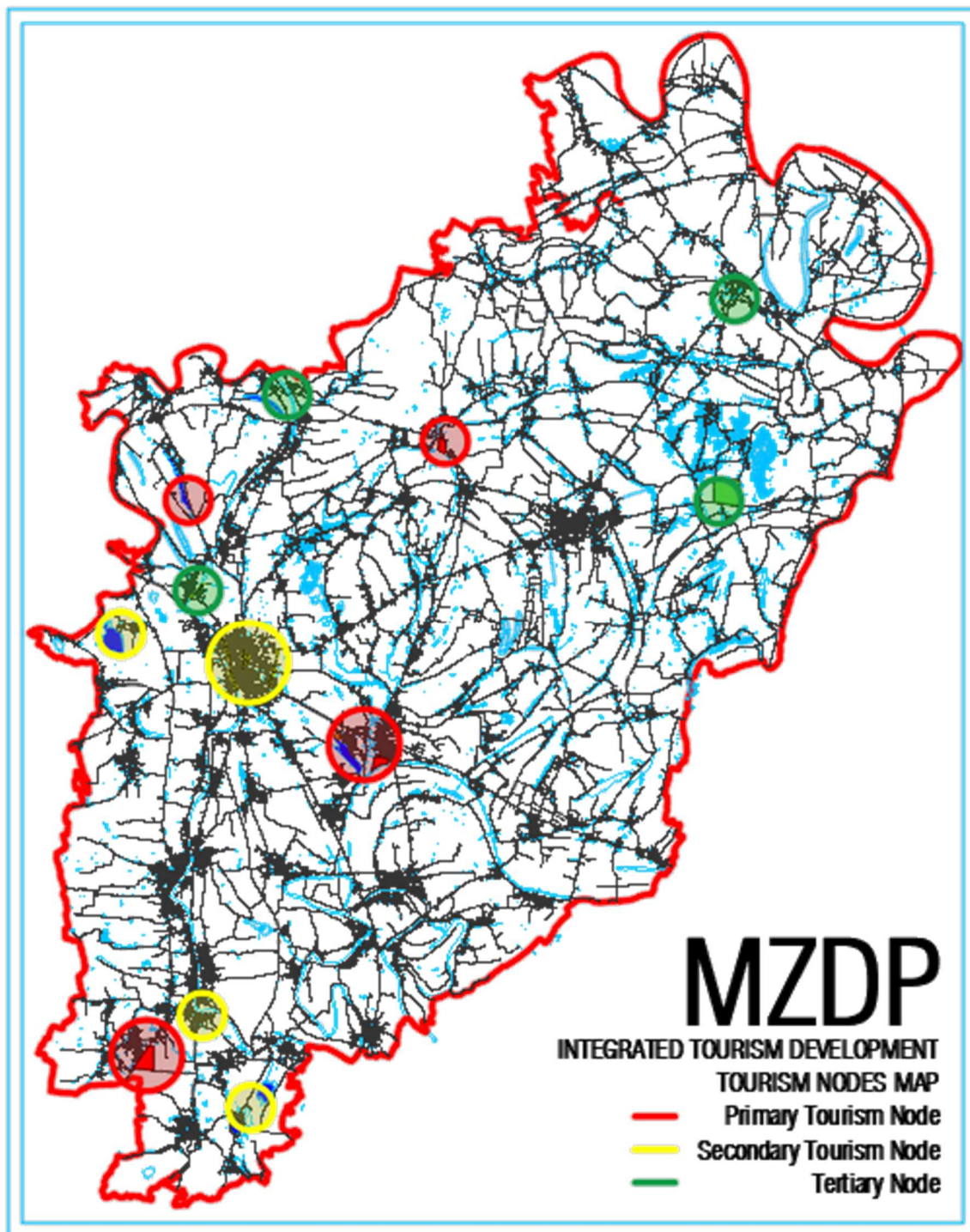


Figure 42 Tourism Nodes Mapping

5.4 Accommodation Strategy

Given the current shortage of formal accommodation, the plan proposes a diversified lodging system.

1. Aamjhupi Hotel Zone (Primary Accommodation Hub)

- Boutique hotels (20–50 rooms)
- Heritage-themed resorts
- Conference and retreat center
- Café, gallery, cultural performance area
- Designed to respect Neelkuthi architecture

2. Eco-Cottages near Beels

- Small-scale wooden or bamboo structures
- Raised plinths to withstand flooding
- Solar-powered lighting
- Toilet & waste management units
- Community-operated

3. Homestay Network (CBT)

- Standardized quality guidelines
- Located in safe, culturally rich village areas
- Encourages rural economic growth

4. Urban Accommodation (Meherpur Sadar)

- Budget hotels
- Business guest houses
- Food courts and tourist service centers



Figure 43 Sample Eco-Cottage

5.5 Riverfront & Landscape Interventions

Although Meherpur lacks a major river within central areas, the **Bhairab & Kajla Riverfront (proposed)** and several canals offer opportunities for scenic development.

Proposed Interventions

- Riverfront walkway
- Amphitheatre for cultural shows
- Viewing decks
- Riverside café cluster
- Tourist information kiosk
- Green buffer landscaping

Lakeside and Beel Landscape Interventions

- Picnic zones
- Shaded seating areas
- Flower and lotus gardens
- Small pavilions for rest and photography



Figure 44 Sample Riverfront/Amphitheater Concept

5.6 Eco-Tourism Infrastructure

To activate the Beel Tourism Corridor, low-impact eco-tourism infrastructure is essential.

Infrastructure Priorities

1. Walkways & Trails

- Wooden/bamboo boardwalks
- Nature trails (2–3 km loops)
- Interpretive signage

2. Viewing & Observation Points

- Watchtowers
- Birdwatching shelters
- Landscape platforms

3. Jetty & Water Access Points

- Floating jetty for monsoon
- Small paddle boats
- Canoeing routes

4. Visitor Amenities

- Toilets
- Water stations
- Waste bins and recycling hubs

5. Safety Features

- Designated walking paths
- Life jackets and rails
- Night lighting powered by solar



Figure 45 Wetland Walkway

5.7 Tourism Branding & Marketing Framework

A strong identity and marketing plan are crucial for attracting tourists.

Brand Components

- District tourism logo and slogan
- Unified signage across all nodes
- Official website & mobile app
- Drone and scenic photography bank
- Promo videos of beels, Neelkuthi, and Mujibnagar
- Collaboration with national tourism boards

Marketing Channels

- Social media campaigns
- Tour operator partnerships
- School excursion packages
- Cultural festival calendar
- Tie-up with neighboring districts & West Bengal tourism circuits

5.8 Visitor Experience & Interpretation Strategy

- QR-coded information boards
- Audio-guided tours
- Storytelling plaques
- Night-time illuminated walks
- Interactive exhibitions at Mujibnagar
- Heritage story trails at Neelkuthi



Figure 46 Interpretation Center or Digital Display Example

5.9 Sustainability & Climate Resilience Integration

Environmental sustainability is embedded across all interventions.

Key Approaches

- Wetland conservation and hydrological protection
- Climate-resilient building materials
- Solar energy integration
- Zero-plastic tourism zones
- Waste management units in all nodes
- Flood-adaptive architecture (raised plinths, stilt houses)

5.10 Overall Spatial Structure of the Tourism Plan

The tourism plan integrates:

- **Core Nodes:** Mujibnagar, Aamjhupi, Chad Beel cluster
- **Supporting Nodes:** Kutubpur, Teroghoria, DC Eco Park
- **Corridors:** Beel Tourism Corridor + Heritage & Freedom Corridor

- **Urban Hubs:** Meherpur Sadar & Gangni
- **Border Gateway:** Mujibnagar

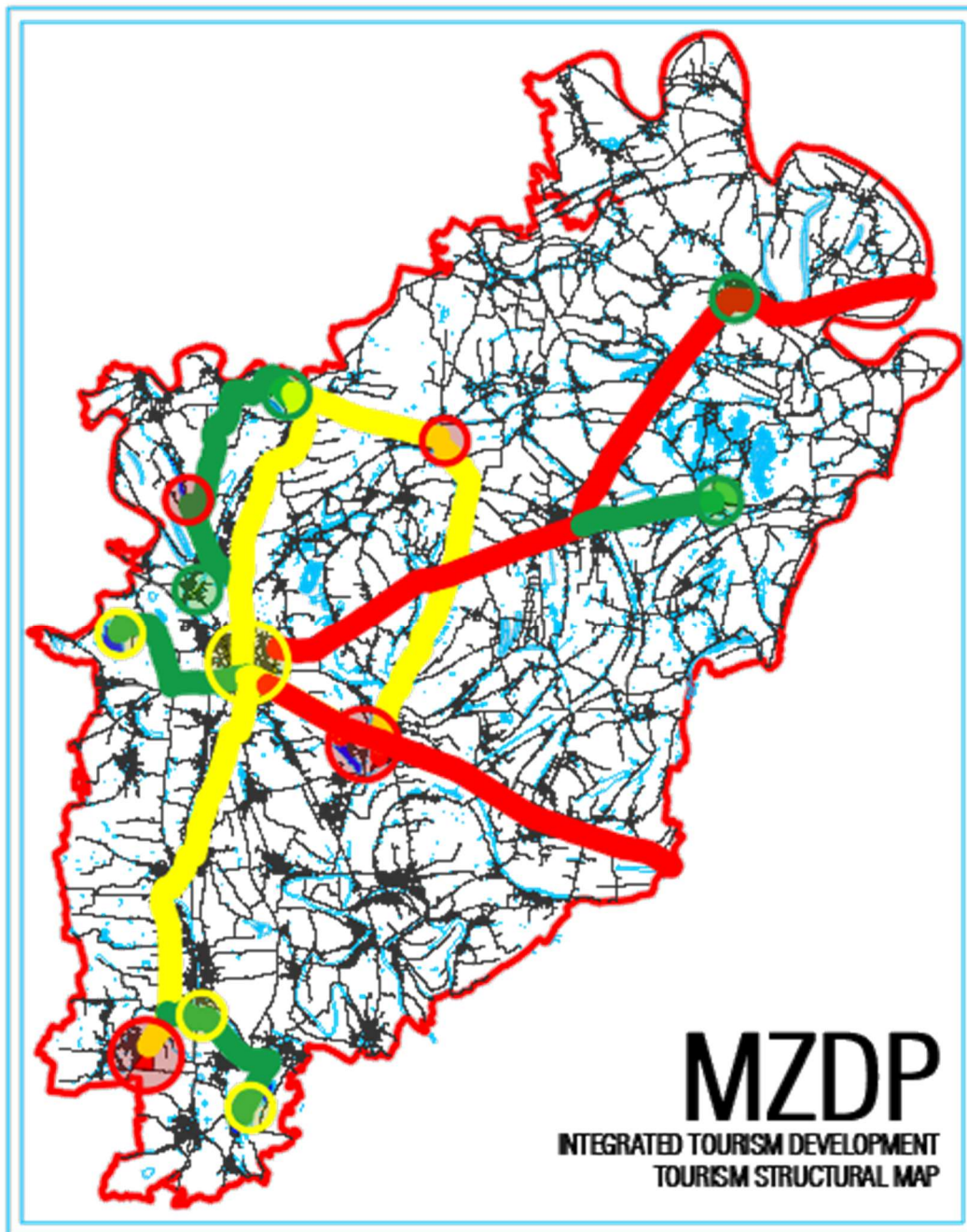


Figure 47 Final Integrated Tourism Development Structure Map

6. Environmental Management & Sustainability

Environmental sustainability forms the backbone of the Integrated Tourism Development Plan for Meherpur District. As the district's tourism assets are deeply rooted in natural wetlands, agricultural landscapes, biodiversity, and historic environments, long-term success depends on protecting ecological systems while enabling controlled, low-impact tourism. This chapter outlines conservation priorities, impact mitigation measures, climate resilience strategies, and sustainable design guidelines for all tourism interventions.

6.1 Wetland Conservation Strategy

Wetlands (beels) are the ecological lifeline of Meherpur. They support fisheries, biodiversity, natural flood management, and seasonal agriculture. The Beel Tourism Corridor must therefore operate within strict ecological safeguards.

Key Components of the Wetland Conservation Strategy

A. Conservation Core Zones

- Establish **no-construction** zones 50m from the water edge based on ecological sensitivity.
- Protect native aquatic vegetation, breeding areas, and migratory bird habitats.
- Prohibit land filling, embankment modification, and mechanized tourist boats.

B. Water Quality Monitoring

- Regular water sampling for turbidity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and pollution indicators.
- Collaborate with DoE, LGED, and local communities.
- Establish community watch groups to prevent dumping and agricultural runoff.

C. Seasonal Activities Regulation

- Floating walkways allowed only in winter or low-impact periods.
- Limit visitor numbers during migratory bird seasons (Dec–Feb).

D. Controlled Fishing & Resource Use

- Promote sustainable fishing practices.
- Restrict harmful nets or seasonal overharvesting.
- Support integrated rice–fish agro-ecological practices in buffer zones.



Figure 48 Bird Habitat

6.2 Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

All proposed tourism structures—eco-cottages, walkways, viewing decks, jetties—must handle seasonality, flooding, and climate change impacts.

A. Flood-Resilient Architectural Guidelines

- Raised plinths (0.9m–1.5m above ground/flood line).
- Stilt-based structures in high-water zones.
- Use of bamboo, treated wood, recycled materials, and lightweight construction.

B. Climate-Resilient Drainage Systems

- Permeable pathways with grass pavers.
- Natural swales along approach roads.
- Drainage channels leading to retention ponds.

C. Urban Heat Mitigation (Meherpur Sadar & Riverfront)

- Shaded tree corridors.
- Green roofing on public buildings.

- Heat-reflective roofing materials.

D. Renewable Energy Adoption

- Solar lighting at all viewing decks, walkways, and gateways.
- Solar mini-grids at eco-cottage clusters.



Figure 49 Flood-resilient eco-lodge

6.3 Waste, Water & Sanitation Standards

Tourism can create pressure on rural environments if waste and sanitation are not properly managed. The plan establishes standards aligned with national environmental guidelines.

A. Solid Waste Management

- Install waste collection bins at every tourism node.
- Introduce sorting bins (organic, recyclable, non-recyclable).
- Weekly collection system in partnership with Union Parishad.
- Prohibit plastic carry bags in wetland zones.

B. Sanitation Facilities

- Eco-friendly toilets using bio-digester systems.

- Raised toilet blocks in wetland areas to prevent contamination.
- Handwashing and hygiene stations at nodal points.

C. Water Resource Management

- Rainwater harvesting at visitor centers and cottages.
- Greywater recycling for landscape irrigation.
- Install water purification units for tourist drinking water.

D. “Zero Liquid Discharge” Sensitive Zones

- No wastewater flow directly into beels.
- Buffer vegetation bands to naturally filter runoff.



Figure 50 Eco-toilet model

6.4 Impact Mitigation Measures

Tourism activities must be carefully controlled to avoid damaging sensitive habitats, heritage sites, or village ecosystems.

A. Visitor Flow Management

- Define walking trails and restrict off-trail movement.

- Use rope guides and bamboo fences in delicate zones.
- Introduce digital visitor data tracking at major sites.

B. Noise & Disturbance Reduction

- Ban loud music in wetland areas.
- Establish quiet zones for birdwatching.
- Use silent electric boats where needed.

C. Heritage Site Protection

- Structural conservation of Neelkuthi buildings.
- Install interpretive signage without harming historic fabric.
- Limit large crowds at heritage plazas.

D. Carrying Capacity Monitoring

- Determine maximum daily visitors for beels and heritage sites.
- Implement advance booking during peak festivals.

E. Construction Impact Control

- Avoid construction during the nesting/migratory season.
- Use local materials and labor to reduce footprint.
- Prohibit heavy machinery near wetlands.

6.5 Disaster Risk Management

Meherpur's tourism nodes must be resilient to natural hazards such as floods, heat waves, and storms.

A. Flood Preparedness

- Elevated structures
- Emergency evacuation routes
- Flood-safe emergency shelters in villages
- Real-time water level monitoring stations

B. Heat Wave Management

- Cooling shade trees and pavilions

- Drinking water stations
- Heat advisories for visitors

C. Storm Resilience

- Strong anchoring for viewing decks
- Removable bamboo walkways
- Storm-warning signage

D. Emergency Response Plans

- Training local community volunteers
- First-aid kits at all tourism nodes
- District Emergency Operations Center coordination

6.6 Sustainability Standards for Tourism Infrastructure

A. Materials & Design

- Use local materials (bamboo, jute composites, brick, local timber).
- Low-carbon construction methods.
- Vernacular aesthetics integrated into design.

B. Energy Efficiency

- LED solar lamps
- Low-wattage lighting in ecological zones
- Shared electricity micro-grids in village homestays

C. Mobility

- Prioritize NMT (bicycles, walking).
- Electric rickshaws for last-mile access.
- Shaded walking boulevards around beels.

D. Landscape Management

- Native plant species only
- Avoid invasive species
- Maintain green buffers around water edges

- Create pollinator gardens to support biodiversity

E. Community-Led Management

- Local youth employed as eco-guides
- Community monitoring teams for litter, noise, and visitor behavior
- Revenue-sharing mechanisms through CBT programs

6.7 Sustainable Tourism Certification Program (Proposed)

To ensure long-term sustainability, the plan proposes a district-level certification for tourism services.

Certification Categories

- Eco-Cottage Sustainability Seal
- Wetland-Friendly Activity Badge
- Community Leadership Award
- Heritage Protection Compliance

This enhances accountability and positions Meherpur as a “green tourism model district.”

6.8 Summary: Environmental Management Integration

The strategies ensure that:

- Wetlands are **protected and enhanced**, not exploited
- Tourism remains **low-impact and controlled**
- Infrastructure is **climate resilient**
- Communities are **beneficiaries and custodians** of nature
- Heritage sites are **preserved with dignity**
- The district’s tourism future is **environmentally stable**

7. Community Participation & Livelihood Development

Community participation is central to the success and sustainability of tourism development in Meherpur District. As the district's tourism landscape is deeply interconnected with village life, wetland ecosystems, agricultural livelihoods, and cultural heritage, it is essential that local people not only benefit from tourism but also take a leadership role in shaping, managing, and preserving it. This chapter outlines the framework for **community engagement, livelihood diversification, capacity-building programs, and inclusive economic growth** within the tourism sector.

7.1 Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Framework

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) positions local residents as hosts, guides, managers, and beneficiaries. Meherpur's rural hospitality, safe villages, natural beauty, and cultural depth make it ideal for CBT programs.

Core Components of CBT in Meherpur

- **Homestays** run by trained families in villages near beels, Neelkuthis, and heritage nodes.
- **Village Guides** offering nature walks, birdwatching tours, heritage storytelling, and agricultural activities.
- **Community-Managed Eco-Cottages** near beels (Gopalpur, Horirumpur, Dharlar).
- **Local Craft Bazaars** operated by women and youth.
- **Cultural Performances** in open plazas or village courtyards.

CBT ensures that tourism revenue stays within communities, promoting grassroots development.

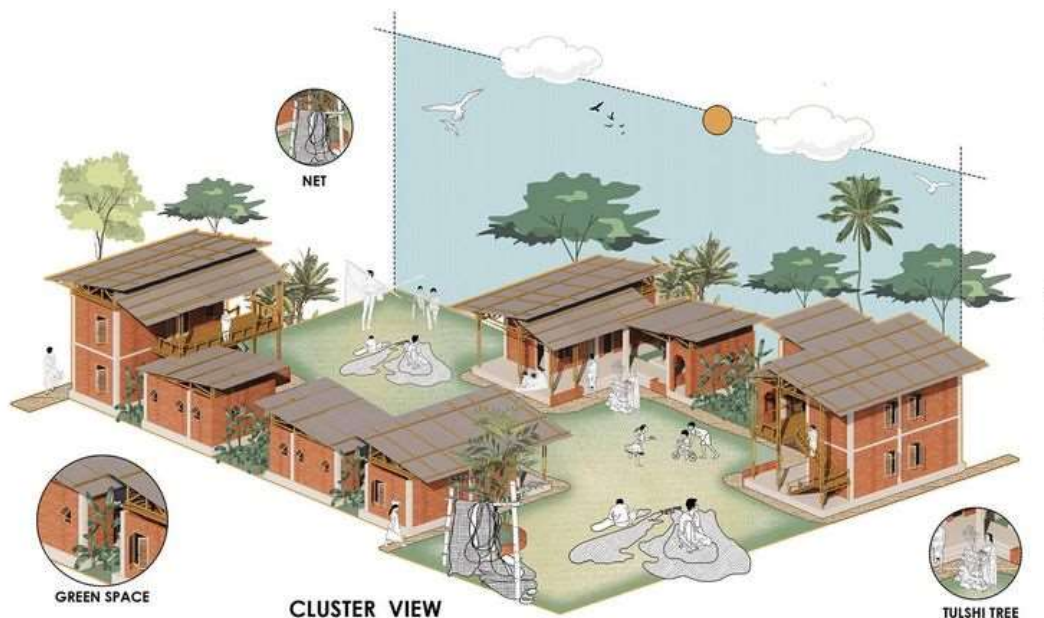


Figure 51 Rural Homestay

7.2 Skill Development & Capacity Building

A skilled local workforce is crucial for delivering high-quality tourism experiences. The plan proposes a multi-level capacity-building program involving government agencies, NGOs, universities, and tourism experts.

Training Programs

1. Eco-Tourism Guide Training

- Bird identification
- Storytelling techniques
- Safety and emergency response
- Navigation and visitor management

2. Hospitality & Homestay Management

- Cleanliness & hygiene standards
- Guest communication
- Food safety & local cuisine preparation

3. Small Business Development

- Entrepreneurship training
- Pricing, packaging, and marketing
- Financial literacy

4. Craft & Product Development

- New designs for bamboo, jute, and pottery
- Branding and packaging skills

5. Heritage Interpretation & Conservation

- Training youth as heritage guides
- Awareness of preserving Neelkuthi and cultural sites

7.3 Local Business & Craft Promotion

Tourism can stimulate micro-enterprises, particularly for women and youth.

Opportunities for Local Entrepreneurs

- **Handicrafts:** Bamboo items, pottery, handwoven products, jute crafts

- **Food-based Enterprises:** Local sweets, pickles, spices, fruit products
- **Transport Services:** Bicycle rental, van service, eco-rickshaw
- **Photography Services:** Local youth trained in tourist photography
- **Agro-Tourism Workshops:** Farming demonstrations, seedling tours

A “**Made in Meherpur**” **Craft Collective** can be launched under district branding, connecting artisans with tourists and external markets.

Proposed Craft Market Areas

- Aamjhupi Neelkuthi Cultural Plaza
- Mujibnagar Memorial Forecourt
- Chad Beel and Teroghoria Lake parking nodes



Figure 52 Women artisan workspace

7.4 Gender-Inclusive Tourism Opportunities

Women in Meherpur are already active in farming, craft-making, food processing, and household hospitality—making them natural partners for tourism.

Women-Focused Interventions

- Women-led **homestay clusters**
- Women-run **food courts and local cuisine cafés**
- Handicraft enterprises managed by women's groups
- Training in weaving, sewing, and pottery
- Women employed as eco-guides and hospitality staff

Empowerment Benefits

- Increased household income
- Higher social recognition
- Skill development and leadership roles
- Strengthening women's decision-making in village tourism committees

7.5 Stakeholder Mapping & Engagement Framework

Tourism involves many stakeholders, each with distinct roles. Effective collaboration ensures transparency, local ownership, and reduced conflict.

Key Stakeholders

- **Local Communities and Village Committees**
- **District Administration** (DC office, Upazila Parshad)
- **LGED & RHD** for infrastructure
- **Department of Environment (DoE)**
- **Forest & Fisheries Departments**
- **Tourism Boards** (Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation)
- **Educational Institutions** (schools, colleges, University)
- **Local Entrepreneurs and SMEs**
- **Cultural Groups & Artisans**
- **NGOs working on livelihood development**

Engagement Methods

- Monthly village tourism committees
- Workshops and training programs
- Public exhibitions of project proposals
- Special community events for feedback
- Youth volunteer groups for tourism awareness

7.6 Community Governance & Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms

To maintain transparency and long-term sustainability, community governance must be formalized.

Proposed Governance Structure

- **Village Tourism Committee (VTC)** – manages homestays, tours, finances
- **Beel Conservation Committee (BCC)** – responsible for wetland protection
- **Heritage Steward Group (HSG)** – monitors Neelkuthi and cultural sites
- **District Tourism Council (DTC)** – coordinates all stakeholders

Benefit-Sharing Guidelines

- 60–70% of income from eco-cottages and homestays goes directly to families
- 15–20% reserved for community funds (schools, cultural events, environment)
- Remaining for maintenance, staff salaries, and admin costs

Transparency Mechanisms

- Annual financial report
- Community audit committee
- Tourism earnings displayed publicly
- Joint bank accounts with VTC leadership

7.7 Youth Engagement & Cultural Programming

Young people in Meherpur can energize tourism activity and add modern vibrancy to heritage and nature hotspots.

Youth-Led Initiatives

- Guided eco-tour walks

- Drone photography & videography
- Digital marketing for district tourism
- Managing cafés and bicycle rental stations
- Organizing festivals and cultural evenings
- Running social media pages for the district

Cultural Events to Promote:

- Baul Night
- Harvest Festival
- Rural Food Festival
- Kite Festival
- Water Festival
- Photography Exhibition from eco-guides



Figure 53 cultural performance scene

7.8 Community Awareness & Environmental Stewardship

Tourism development must be accompanied by awareness-building to strengthen environmental stewardship.

Awareness Programs

- Village meetings on wetland conservation
- School nature clubs
- Clean-up campaigns at beels
- Training on waste segregation
- Cultural programs promoting heritage stories

Environmental Volunteer Network

A district-wide network of young volunteers who monitor visitor behavior, help tourists, and coordinate with authorities.

7.9 Summary: A Community-Led Tourism Future

Community participation ensures that Meherpur's tourism growth:

- **Strengthens local economies**, especially for women and youth
- **Preserves environmental and cultural heritage**
- **Creates authentic visitor experiences**
- **Builds ownership and pride among residents**
- **Ensures long-term sustainability and responsible development**

8. Architect's & Planner's Contribution Space

This chapter highlights the critical role of architectural and urban planning expertise in shaping the long-term vision, design direction, and spatial identity of Meherpur's Integrated Tourism Development Plan. As the district grows into a vibrant eco-cultural tourism destination, architects and planners play a central role in ensuring that development is **context-sensitive, aesthetically meaningful, environmentally responsible, and aligned with local heritage and culture.**

The chapter provides dedicated sections where design concepts, sketches, masterplans, and architectural proposals can be incorporated.

8.1 Design Approach & Architectural Philosophy

The architectural vision for Meherpur's tourism development emphasizes:

A. Respect for Vernacular Architecture

- Use of local materials (brick, bamboo, timber, thatch, jute composites).
- Forms inspired by traditional rural houses, Neelkuthi structures, and courtyard typologies.
- Human-scale, low-impact design that blends into the wetland landscape.

B. Place-Making & Identity Building

- Creating memorable public spaces—plazas, waterfronts, courtyards, cultural streets—reflecting Meherpur's rural charm and historical depth.
- Strengthening visual identity along the Beel Tourism Corridor with signature gateways, signage, and viewing decks.

C. Harmony with Nature

- Elevated walkways, eco-cottages, and platforms designed to protect wetlands.
- Integration of natural ventilation, daylighting, and climate-responsive forms.
- Minimal land cutting or alteration.

D. Culture-Driven Architectural Expression

- Design inspired by Neelkuthi arches, indigo vats, colonial brick patterns, and 1971 heritage symbolism.
- Spaces that accommodate festivals, music performances, exhibitions, and community gatherings.

8.2 Site-Specific Design Concepts (Your Input)

This section is reserved for inserting your own architectural design ideas for key tourism nodes. Each subsection gives you space to include diagrams, concept notes, and visualizations.

A. Aamjhupi Neelkuthi Tourism Hub

Potential design inclusions:

- Adaptive reuse of Neelkuthi buildings
- Lighting and Acoustic show in kajla riverfront
- Café courtyard design
- Craft market layout
- Light-and-sound show space
- Landscape masterplan





B. Chad Beel Eco-Cottage Zone

Concept Areas:

- Elevated eco-cottage cluster design
- Floating or bamboo walkways
- Viewing deck structure
- Rural mobility hub (bicycle stations)
- Signage and branding elements

C. Teroghoria Lake Waterfront Development

Possible design elements:

- Amphitheatre
- Lakeside promenades
- Shaded seating zones
- Street-food court design
- Children's play area
- Boats & jetty design

D. Bhairab Riverfront (Proposed Urban Design Intervention)

Architecture/Urban Design Components:

- 1 km landscaped promenade
- Cultural pavilion or event stage

- River-edge café cluster
- Riverside bazaar
- Public art installations inspired by 1971 history
- Night lighting plan

E. Heritage & Cultural Circuit Design

Design focus:

- Pathways and heritage markers
- Interpretive signage at Neelkuthi
- Mini-museum or gallery layout
- Open-air exhibition concept

8.3 Visuals, Sketches & Concept Drawings

This section serves as a gallery for inserting project drawings.

Suggested visuals include:

- **Masterplans** of tourism nodes
- **Concept sections** for walkways, eco-lodges, riverfronts
- **Material palettes** for sustainable construction
- **Signage and branding**
- **Street furniture concepts** (benches, lighting, gates)
- **Landscape plans** for beel edges, plazas, and parks

8.4 Guidelines for Future Design Development

To ensure coherence across future development, architects should follow these guidelines:

A. Material & Aesthetic Consistency

- Earth tones
- Brick masonry with lime plaster
- Bamboo/wood hybrid structures

B. Environmental Integration

- Raised platforms in wetland zones

- Minimal obstruction to water flow
- Use of native plant species
- Avoiding hard concrete edges near beels

C. Human-Centered Design

- Prioritize accessibility (ramps, shaded paths)
- Adequate seating/rest points
- Child-friendly spaces

D. Safety & Maintenance

- Railings at viewing decks
- Solar-powered light posts
- Durable, repairable materials
- Community-managed maintenance plans

E. Cultural Sensitivity

- Honor local memory and heritage
- Avoid intrusive modern forms near Neelkuthi
- Preserve sightlines and historical perspectives

8.5 Summary

Architects and planners play an essential role in guiding Meherpur's tourism transformation. By integrating design excellence, cultural sensitivity, and ecological responsibility, they create spaces that:

- Strengthen local identity
- Enhance visitor experience
- Protect the environment
- Empower community livelihoods
- Define a unique district-wide aesthetic

This chapter gives you the creative freedom to shape Meherpur's tourism future through professional design thinking.

9. Implementation Framework

The Implementation Framework provides a structured pathway for turning the Integrated Tourism Development Plan into actionable, phased, and financially viable projects. This chapter outlines governance structures, stakeholder roles, action plans, phasing priorities, risk mitigation strategies, and coordination arrangements necessary for sustained tourism development in Meherpur District. A clear implementation roadmap helps ensure timely execution, transparency, accountability, and community participation.

9.1 Short-, Medium- & Long-Term Action Plan

Tourism development in Meherpur must be implemented in stages to align with financial capacity, environmental protection, and institutional readiness.

A. Short-Term (0–2 Years): Foundation Building

Objective: Establish enabling conditions, launch pilot projects, strengthen governance

Key Activities:

- Establish the **District Tourism Council (DTC)** and Village Tourism Committees
- Begin restoration works at **Aamjhupi & Vatpara Neelkuthi**
- **Riverfront Development** at Aamjhupi Neelkuthi
- Develop **pilot eco-cottage clusters** in Chand Beel
- Launch signage, branding, and wayfinding system
- Create **tourism website and mobile app**
- Improve basic amenities at Aamjhupi Neelkuthi, Vatpara Neelkuthi, Mujibnagar and Teroghoria Lake
- Construct **first-phase boardwalks** at Chad Beel
- Train youth as eco-guides and community hosts
- Implement waste management improvements in tourism nodes

Expected Outputs:

- Improved visitor orientation
- Initial tourism circuits activated
- Visible identity for Meherpur tourism

B. Medium-Term (2–5 Years): Expansion & Consolidation

Objective: Scale up infrastructure, enhance circuits, strengthen marketing

Key Activities:

- Complete **Beel Tourism Corridor Phase-2**: walkways, jetties, cycle paths
- Develop full **Aamjhupi Tourism Hub** (hotel, gallery, craft bazaar)
- Riverfront development at Bhairab (first 500–1000m stretch)
- Create **Cultural Plaza** for performances and festivals
- Build safety infrastructure (railings, solar lighting, signage)
- Expand community homestay network across three upazilas
- Establish **Tourism Service Centers** with toilets, maps, rest zones
- Introduce annual **Meherpur Festival & Bird Festival**

Expected Outputs:

- Fully functional circuits
- Improved tourist services
- Stronger cultural and eco-tourism offerings

C. Long-Term (5–10 Years): Maturity & Sustainability

Objective: Achieve full district-wide tourism integration with sustainability

Key Activities:

- Complete **full Beel Tourism Corridor**
- Construct large-scale amphitheatre and public event grounds
- Expand Bhairab Riverfront to full length
- Establish regional tourism promotion with Kushtia, Chuadanga & India
- Implement smart digital visitor tracking and environmental monitoring systems
- Strengthen certification program for “Green Tourism District”

Expected Outputs:

- District emerges as a model eco-cultural tourism destination
- Fully sustainable community-led tourism economy

9.2 Institutional Roles & Responsibilities

Effective implementation requires clear role allocation among government agencies, private actors, and communities.

A. District Tourism Council (DTC)

Lead Coordination Agency

Roles:

- Oversee all tourism projects
- Approve annual tourism plans
- Manage partnerships and budget allocation
- Monitor implementation progress

Chaired by: **Deputy Commissioner, Meherpur**

Members: LGED, RHD, DoE, Forest Dept, Cultural groups, Youth reps, NGOs

B. Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)

- Develop access roads to beels, shrines, and heritage sites
- Improve drainage, walkways, parking, and basic facilities

C. Roads and Highways Department (RHD)

- Upgrade regional roads
- Install tourism directional signage

D. Department of Environment (DoE)

- Enforce conservation regulations
- Monitor water quality & pollution risks

E. Department of Archaeology

- Oversee Neelkuthi and heritage site restoration
- Approve conservation-sensitive interventions

F. Forest & Fisheries Departments

- Manage wetland fish resources
- Biodiversity conservation

- Mangrove/vegetation restoration initiatives

G. Private Sector & Investors

- Operate hotels, cafés, eco-resorts
- Co-invest in riverfront amenities
- Support marketing and events

H. Community Groups / Village Tourism Committees

- Operate homestays, eco-cottages, craft markets
- Manage visitor services
- Oversee maintenance and cleanliness
- Implement cultural programs

9.3 Public–Private Partnership (PPP) Opportunities

PPP models can accelerate infrastructure development while reducing the fiscal burden.

Priority PPP Areas

- Aamjhupi boutique hotel zone
- Eco-cottage clusters
- Riverfront cafés and marketplaces
- Adventure tourism activities (canoeing, cycling rental)
- Cultural performance venues
- Visitor centers with cafés and souvenir shops

Recommended PPP Models

- *Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)* for hotels & cafés
- *Lease models* for eco-cottage clusters
- *Revenue-sharing agreements* with community groups
- *Joint ventures* for festival/event management

9.4 Phasing Strategy for Major Projects

A. Priority Projects (Phase 1)

1. Chad Beel walkways

2. Aamjhupi Neelkuthi repair
3. Tourist signage & branding
4. Eco-guide training programs
5. Mujibnagar facility improvements
6. Pilot eco-cottage construction

B. Secondary Projects (Phase 2)

1. Riverfront development (first stretch)
2. Full Kolar–Gopalpur–Horirumpur corridor construction
3. Kutubpur Temple plaza
4. Heritage interpretation centers

C. Long-Term Projects (Phase 3)

1. Border Heritage Museum
2. Full Bhairab Riverfront expansion
3. District tourism headquarters
4. Annual mega cultural festivals infrastructure

9.5 Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Structure

Tourism development must be continuously supervised to maintain quality and sustainability.

Monitoring Mechanisms

- Monthly review by Village Tourism Committees
- Quarterly reporting to District Tourism Council
- GIS-based monitoring for wetland health
- Visitor data analytics—footfall, satisfaction, spending
- Heritage conservation audits

Key M&E Indicators

- Increase in annual visitors
- Number of community jobs created
- Reduction in plastic waste

- Wetland biodiversity indicators
- Visitor satisfaction index
- Homestay occupancy rate
- Annual revenue generated

9.6 Risk Assessment & Management Framework

Tourism development faces multiple risks related to environment, finance, governance, and social systems.

A. Environmental Risks

- Wetland degradation
 - Pollution
 - Climate change impacts
- Mitigation:** Strict zoning, monitoring, eco-friendly design

B. Social Risks

- Unequal benefit distribution
 - Resistance from community
- Mitigation:** CBT model, inclusive planning workshops

C. Economic Risks

- Investment delays
 - Uncertain visitor numbers
- Mitigation:** Phase-wise development, PPP model

D. Governance Risks

- Poor coordination
 - Lack of trained personnel
- Mitigation:** Activate District Tourism Council immediately

E. Disaster Risks

- Floods, storms
- Mitigation:** Climate-resilient design, emergency plans

9.7 Summary: A Roadmap for Sustainable Tourism Growth

This implementation framework provides:

- A clear set of phased priorities

- Defined institutional responsibilities
- Mechanisms for community participation
- Opportunities for private investment
- Tools for monitoring and risk mitigation
- A governance structure for long-term management

Together, these elements ensure that Meherpur's tourism development is **feasible, sustainable, inclusive, and impactful**.

10. Conclusion & Way Forward

The Integrated Tourism Development Plan for Meherpur District presents a comprehensive roadmap for transforming the region into a vibrant, environmentally responsible, and culturally rich tourism destination. By leveraging its exceptional natural resources—beels, wetlands, lakes, and riverfronts—alongside its unique historical, religious, and cultural heritage, Meherpur has the potential to emerge as a leading model of sustainable rural tourism development in Bangladesh.

The preceding chapters outline a multi-dimensional approach that integrates spatial planning, heritage conservation, community empowerment, environmental management, and economic development. Through a coordinated effort among government institutions, private investors, and local communities, this plan establishes the foundation for long-term, resilient tourism growth.

10.1 Key Achievements of the Planning Process

1. **Creation of a District-Wide Tourism Vision**

A unified vision for Meherpur that blends eco-tourism, cultural tourism, agri-tourism, religious tourism, and heritage tourism into a cohesive experience.

2. **Identification and Mapping of Natural and Cultural Assets**

Detailed inventories and spatial analysis ensure evidence-based planning and prioritization.

3. **Introduction of Sustainable Tourism Strategies**

Emphasis on conservation zones, eco-friendly construction, sustainable mobility, and climate resilience.

4. **Community-Centered Approach**

The plan places local residents at the heart of tourism development—ensuring equitable benefit-sharing, capacity building, and long-term ownership.

5. **Architectural & Spatial Design Integration**

Dedicated action plan areas allow professionals to contribute designs for resorts, riverfronts, walkways, plazas, and public spaces.

6. **Comprehensive Implementation Framework**

Provides clear roles, timelines, financial projections, monitoring mechanisms, and governance structures.

10.2 Strategic Priorities for the Next Decade

To ensure successful implementation, Meherpur must prioritize:

1. **Strengthening Institutional Capacity**

- Establishing and empowering the District Tourism Council (DTC)
- Training local officials, guides, and entrepreneurs
- Creating monitoring and reporting systems

2. Investment in Key Tourism Nodes

- Aamjhupi & Vatpara Neelkuthi restoration
- Chand Beel Eco-Resort
- Beel Tourism Corridor
- Bhairab Riverfront Promenade
- Teroghoria Lake development
- Cultural and Heritage Trail

3. Enhancing Connectivity & Access

- Roads, signage, cycle routes, and mobility hubs
- Digital connectivity through apps and visitor portals

4. Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

- Wetland conservation
- Waste management
- Climate-resilient infrastructure
- Ecosystem restoration

5. Expanding Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

- Homestay networks
- Craft markets
- Women- and youth-led enterprises
- Capacity-building programs

6. Leveraging Public–Private Partnerships

- Attracting investors for hotels, cafés, adventure tourism, and event venues
- Creating incentives for green businesses
- Ensuring transparent agreements and shared revenue models

10.3 Risks & Mitigation: A Forward-Looking Perspective

Although the plan is comprehensive, Meherpur must remain aware of potential risks:

Environmental Risks

- Wetland degradation
- Pollution from unregulated tourism
Mitigation: Strict zoning, eco-friendly designs, strong DoE oversight.

Socio-Economic Risks

- Unequal benefit distribution
- Overdependence on tourism
Mitigation: Strong community systems, diversified livelihoods.

Governance Risks

- Weak coordination
- Policy discontinuity
Mitigation: Institutionalized committees and transparent monitoring.

Financial Risks

- Funding shortages or delays
Mitigation: Diversified funding sources, phased budgeting, PPP models.

10.4 Future Directions & Expansion Opportunities

A. Cross-Border Tourism Development

Given Meherpur's strategic proximity to India:

- Joint festivals
- Border tourism at Bongram
- Shared culture routes

B. Regional Integration

Connecting Meherpur with:

- Kushtia (Lalon Shah)
- Jhenaidah (rural heritage)
- Chuadanga (eco-agriculture)

C. Innovation & Digital Tourism

- Smart ticketing
- Digital interpretation for heritage sites

- Virtual tours
- QR-based storytelling trails

D. Climate-Adaptive Infrastructure

- Floating walkways
- Elevated structures
- Nature-based flood mitigation

E. Educational & Research Tourism

- Partnerships with universities for ecology, architecture, planning, and heritage studies
- Annual “Meherpur Tourism Research Week”

10.5 Final Thoughts

Meherpur stands at the threshold of a transformative era. With its rare combination of natural beauty, rich history, and resilient communities, the district can evolve into a beacon of sustainable tourism in Bangladesh. The success of this plan depends on **collaboration, discipline, and vision**.

The way forward requires commitment from:

- Government institutions
- Local communities
- Private investors
- Civil society
- Architects & planners
- Environmental experts
- Cultural organizations

If all stakeholders work together with transparency and passion, Meherpur can emerge as a national and regional example of how tourism, when properly planned, can uplift livelihoods, restore nature, celebrate heritage, and create memorable experiences for generations to come.