

Staff Reporter

Cabinet Economic Affairs Committee on Wednesday in principle approved four proposals, including two separate tourism projects under the public private partnership.

Of the two tourism projects, one is an exclusive tourist zone (ETZ) and the other is construction of an international standard tourist complex in a government-owned existing tourist motel. Both will be established at two separate locations in Cox's Bazar, the country's main tourism district. The other two approved proposals are setting up of a shopping mall-cum- guest house on Railway land in Khulna district under public private partnership (PPP), and direct issuance of request for proposal (RFP) to developer for establishing an economic zone in Bagerhat district. A meeting of the Cabinet body, with Finance Minister AMA Muhith in the chair, approved the four proposals.

The meeting, however, sent back a proposal of the Jute and Textile Ministry on extension of New Olympia Textile Mills' due payment to the government. The mills were handed over to a workers-employees-run management.

The Cabinet body asked the ministry to again place the proposal with more details.

Officials said the proposed ETZ will be set up at Sabrang union in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar for which the government has already selected some 1165 acres of land. The project will offer all modern amenities for the tourists so that they could enjoy world-class facilities.

All types of entertainment facilities for the tourists that include modern hotel, restaurants, nightclub, water sports, observation tower and golf courts will be accommodated in the ETZ project, according to the officials.

The second tourism project, officials said, is constructing an international standard tourism complex in the existing land of the government-owned Motel Upal compound under the PPP scheme. The state-owned Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) owns and operates the Motel Upal.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has recently decided to upgrade the motel into an international standard 5-star hotel complex through the construction of a new 5-star hotel and other facilities under partnership with a private investor, said the officials.

They said the BPC has already conducted a feasibility study in compliance with an earlier decision of the Cabinet body on the project. The price of the existing 576 acres of land of Motel Upal was fixed at Tk 576 crore while the construction cost of the 5-star hotel was determined to be Tk 350 crore.

The move for establishing the ETZ and Motel Upal into international tourism complex has been part of the government's strategy to develop infrastructures in different sectors under public private partnership where the government is facing a cash crunch while the private sector is keen to invest their money.

The officials said the Ministry of Tourism has already identified some exclusive tourism zones in the country's potential places where private investment is badly needed for their development.