

ARAB SPRING - MOST MENA COUNTRIES HARSHLY HIT



Middle East and North African countries are for centuries known for their ancient and historical monuments that attract millions of tourists every year. With the beginning of Arab Spring in December 2010, things changed drastically in the parts of Western Asia and Northern Africa. Year 2010 brought a radical change in the political and economical structure of the North African and Middle East countries.

Some of the North African and West Asian countries largely depend on their tourism. The industry has played a vital role in increasing the number of jobs in the region. But with increased number of revolutions, there was a sharp fall in tourist inflow in first half of the year 2011. Tourism and security being linked well with each other, an incident of civil unrest, makes it difficult to pull tourists to that particular region.

In MENA, encompassing the regions of North Africa and Middle East, the key source of foreign exchange is through the tourism industry. **With the collapsing governments in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, the region saw a total loss of nearly 800 million dollars in 12 months of political unrest which accounted 18% from tourism sector.** The tourism stumbled by around 30% in Egypt and Tunisia after the disturbances began in the first months of 2011. The overall fall in incoming tourism was 13% in North African countries and 11% in the Middle East.

In Egypt, tourism industry backs the employment of around 2 million workers which makes 11% of the GDP. The income generated by tourism accounts to around 20% of the total foreign exchange generated by the region.

While in Tunisia, tourism sector employs around 400,000 employees which accounts to 8% of its total GDP. Being an adverse effect on tourism industries in North African and West Asian countries, **the Arab Spring proved beneficial for tourism industry in UAE where there was recorded an increase in demand for hotel rooms.** Heavy expenditure was made on military arrangements and equipments to bring things under control and make the tourism active again in the region. Recovery in the sector is predicted to occur in 2012.

Arab Spring was a set of revolutions that stirred up in the form of protests and exhibits against the rulers and political set ups of popular Arabian and North African countries in Tunisia, Yemen, Egypt and Libya. Simultaneously civil wars started in Syria and Bahrain followed by major disputes in the countries of Oman, Morocco, Kuwait, Iraq, Jordan and Algeria.

Few minor rebellions were also noticed in Lebanon and Sudan. Many such small and big protests were inspired by Arab Spring making it a world-shattering wave of revolt. These protests took shape of marches, strikes, public meetings, gatherings and rallies which were all organized and managed using social media like internet and other fast modes of communication. All these not only led to political setback but also economical downfall.

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