

# DATA DEFICIENCY: MAIN CAUSE OF BANGLADESH'S STRUGGLING TOURISM INDUSTRY



Industry insiders said during a recent workshop that the tourism industry of Bangladesh has been greatly affected by the deficiency of authentic data. This often obstructs the country's effective strategic planning and setting up appropriate parameters among different organizations, government or private.

Participants strongly believed that the tourism industry of the country is one of the industries which have the brightest potential of becoming large contributors to the national economy. But despite that, **the condition of the tourism sector remains impoverished like the country's extremely weak marketing strategies**, terrible political situation and very poor infrastructure which are all vital factors for a developing country.

Those concerns were raised during the Strategic Scenario Planning for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Workshop organized by the ILO (International Labor Organization), EU (European Union) and the Government of Bangladesh. But aside from those concerns, positive outlook were being observed as well including the demand for more than 40,000 skilled workers for hotels and some other establishments that are projected to open by the year 2020.

The demand for skilled workers will also call for the demand towards establishing more training institutes that will hone and develop the skills of the people who would like to get into the industry.

Francis De Silva, a TVET Reform Project Expert, formally opened the program with his enlightening welcome speech. Jishu Tarafder, The Westin Dhaka Adviser, was the one who moderated the workshop in which 60 participants from various tourism sub-sectors attended.

Shahabuddin Ahmad, Travel World Editor and one of the participants during the said workshop, said that they are getting inconsistent data of the tourist arrivals prepared by the Home Affairs Ministry of Bangladesh. He added that there are barely any data on how Bangladesh will be able to forward accurate data for statistical purposes towards WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) and UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization).

Shahabuddin also said that BBS (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics) always provides two or three-year old data which are apparently considered outdated. This has led WTTC and UNWTO to identify a lot of discrepancies such as miscalculation and misinterpretation of the data.

In order to resolve the adversarial effects of obtaining outdated, insufficient and inaccurate data, Shahabuddin firmly suggested that **the government of Bangladesh must seek for technical support from independent international organizations such as WTTC and UNWTO who shall conduct the collection of the country's tourism statistics and revenue data.**

Shahid Hamid, Dhaka Regency Hotel and Resort executive director, was one of the distinguished participants of the workshop. He revealed that because of data deficiencies, he never knew the exact number or even the approximate number of hotels, motels, restaurants and staffs that exist in their

country. He said that what people like him need in this line of business are accurate, updated and reliable data. This will allow them to create effective strategic planning to enhance the tourism sector. As of the moment, Bangladesh needs the two factors vital in tourism industry - research and statistics.

Along with the country's data deficiency issues, Jamilur Rahman, Kushiara Tourism Managing Director, believed that even if there are any available data, they still can't honor all of these due to unreliability.

In terms of infrastructure, Ghazi Salahuddin, Bangladesh Aviation Academy Chief Executive Officer, shared during the workshop that the country badly needs more airlines and airports for both domestic and international flights.

All of the participants agreed that the government of Bangladesh must pay enough attention of coming up with useful data that can hopefully help alleviate the country's worsening condition of its tourism sector.

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