

INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE BARRIER - GREAT CONCERNS FOR SRI LANKA'S TOURISM PLAN



It looks like infrastructure is standing in the way of Sri Lanka's ambitions. The island has been motivated to increase the number of tourist arrivals since the largest city of Colombo just managed to reach 1 million arrivals. Colombo has proven to be very competitive to the point that they gave their millionth tourist a welcome dance and a free vacation package. However, this seemed to fuel the South Asian Island drive as they set to reach 1.5 million arrivals this

year and also hope to have 2.5 million arrivals in 2016.

Tourism has greatly contributed to the growth of Sri Lanka's economy especially considering the fact that the three decade war ended only in 2009. **Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority says that tourism has managed to earn USD 1 billion for the nation** and has created jobs for over 68,000 people directly and 95,000 indirectly.

Businessmen from many parts of the world are expected to visit Sri Lanka. This has gotten local businesses making investments, hotels creating new projects and the government working on infrastructure in order to ensure that everything is ready for the influx of visitors.

Infrastructure in Sri Lanka

Although Sri Lanka has done a great job in developing fast compared to other countries, there are still some setbacks that make it a challenge to have 2.5 million arrivals in 2016. First and foremost, women are reluctant to join the industry since the work is quite different from their traditional occupation. The other problem is that it is estimated that 600,000 employees are needed to handle all the coming tourists. However, the training institution only produces about 1500 people a year. Small entrepreneurs are also not receiving professional training or guidance regarding the needs and expectations of tourists. These factors are some of the reasons that may prevent Sri Lanka from meeting their goals.

Language Barrier

Language barrier is a major concern when it comes to dealing with tourists. This is because **only 1 out of 10 Sri Lankan citizens speak English**. Transport is also a major issue since there is a lack of international airports in Sri Lanka's main cities. There is also a lot of traffic and roads congested with tuk-tuks and old trucks. Adding to this, the government does not support projects to improve the transport conditions. Unless a huge step is taken, it will be hard to achieve all the goals.

Child Sex-Tourism

The fact that there have been incidences of child-sex tourism in the past is a major concern now that Sri Lanka hopes to boost the tourist numbers. However, some say that the cases of child sex-tourism are not as evident as they were in the past.

Another concern was the increase in price of property with the arrival of tourists. However the situation is said to have changed since now a foreigner needs to have a local resident with 51% ownership rights to buy property.

Having been able to overcome 30 years of civil war and still get to the top, there is hope that Sri Lanka might still achieve all the goals they have set.

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