



## ENLIVENING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

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The tourism industry is well-known as a composite of activities and services that deliver transportation, accommodation, food, shopping, entertainment and hospitality services available for the travelers. All these activities can enhance the economic development process by creating jobs, developing infrastructure and entrepreneurial skills, improving balance of payments, earning foreign exchanges and export revenues. The sustained demand for tourism, coupled with the industry's ability to stay resilient in the face of shocks, continues to underline its great significance and value as a key sector for economic development.

In fact, tourism has emerged from being a relatively small-scale activity into one of world's largest industries since 1960s and onwards. The United Nations has identified the development of tourism as one of the methods poorer countries might use to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Bangladesh, being located in the connecting point of South and South East Asian countries, is home to the longest unbroken sandy sea beach (Cox's Bazar) and the biggest mangrove

area (Sundarbans) in the world. The country has bountiful resources to offer to both local and foreign travelers with its scenic beauty, ethnic diversity, unique cuisine, rich heritage and historical sites, profound religious sentiments and much more. The importance of tourism in Bangladesh is reflected in some recent stylised facts as highlighted in World Travel and Tourism Council.

The direct contribution of tourism to GDP was 296.6 billion taka (1.9 percent of total GDP) in 2014 and is forecast to grow by 6.1 percent per annum to 566.3 billion taka (1.9 percent of total GDP) by 2025.

Furthermore, in 2014, the total contribution of tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by this industry was 3.6 percent of total employment which equals to 1,984,000 jobs. By 2025, tourism is forecast to support 2,492,000 jobs (3.6 percent of total employment).

However, the tourism sector of the country has not been able to reap much benefit despite the immense prospects of development the tourism sector has. There are numerous reasons that stand as a hindrance to the development of the tourism sector of Bangladesh.

It is thus very obvious that efforts need to be taken by Bangladesh government to overcome the barriers of tourism sector to diversify the export basket of the economy as well as attain a sustainable economic development.

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PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

good quality accommodation facilities, decent public transports, safe and secured roads, well-equipped hospitals, and access to clean water, hygienic foods and an uninterrupted access to electricity.

Secondly, the tourism infrastructure is not far too developed as well. The country has yet to offer resorts and hotels of quality, well-equipped with recreational facilities attractive to travelling tourists, well-trained tourist personnel to guide the tourists and other attractive entertainment facilities such as shopping malls, movie theatres, theme parks, museums etc.

Moreover, the lack of community support also stands as a major barrier to the development of the sector. A huge part of the population cannot read, write or speak in English, cannot properly guide a tourist to his destination or do not initiatives to help them in case they need it.

The community has yet to fully understand the value of the tourism sector and that of the tourists. The pitiable law and order situation also, is a very crucial barrier to the growth of the sector. Among other problems, lack of long term plan (master plan) by government, lack of modern recreation facilities, promotional activities, traditional weather forecasting techniques, lack of sufficient safety & security system etc. are vital ones in this regard.

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*Interviewed by NILIMA JAHAN*

## TOURISM AND SECURITY

AKHTARUZ ZAMAN KHAN KABIR  
CEO, Bangladesh Tourism Board

*This is the year that Bangladesh is to begin the tourism campaign- 'Visit Bangladesh Year 2016'. How is it progressing?*

We have received approval to conduct our 'Visit Bangladesh' campaign for three years – 2016, 2017 and 2018. The Prime Minister has inaugurated it on last 27 October, 2015 at the Buddhist Conference. So, we were going forward according to that. But our main challenge is the fund, which was promised to be given to us by the government. It's now in the final stage, and we hope we will have it soon. In that sense, we could not progress according to our plan.

But, except this we have done our different campaigns, stakeholder engagement, consultation with media and different stake holders, community awareness and other regular activities using our regular budget. Also, our tour operators, port allies, different ministries' of Bangladesh government, different agencies had finalised some international events. But the recent two tragedies have created an image of crisis and the international organisers have already cancelled two events. Another is also uncertain.

*Have you taken any measures to overcome this dire situation?*

Yes, we are trying to overcome the situation basically in two folds. We are dealing with our international image of crisis and developing awareness inside our country.

Our main season is from September to February. The political turmoil and fluctuation in 2013-14 has disturbed the free flow of tourism, which has become an issue in different foreign countries and media. We were very hopeful this year. But the recent tragedies have hampered our industry again.

Meanwhile, along with our government, we have addressed the situation immediately, sent condolence messages to them and they showed their solitude in return. We will attend an international fair by the Japan Association of Travel Agents in Japan which will be held from 22-25 September. Along with our traditional brochures and leaflets, we have decided to highlight our apology that this is not Bangladesh, it was very uncertain, a part of global terrorism and we all are resisting.

Also, we will arrange talks with the people who had come to Bangladesh and worked in different forums, to present their views about Bangladesh.

Inside Bangladesh, we are talking to young students from tourism and hospitality departments of different universities and discussing their thoughts on tourism. Apart from these, we have done our eco guide training at Sundarbans, involved our local governments, and created awareness with the local community and journalists about the endangered environments.

*Nasib Ahsan  
ULAB, Dhaka*

## TOURISM



MAD  
GENIUS

### SM SULTAN

10 August 1923 - 10 October 1994

Sheikh Mohammed Sultan (10 August 1923 - 10 October 1994; better known as SM Sultan, was a Bangladesh avant-garde artist who worked in painting and drawing. His fame rests on his striking depictions of exaggeratedly muscular Bangladeshi peasants engaged in the activities of their everyday lives.[1] He is the son of Sheikh Mohammed Mecher Ali and Mochammed Meherunnesa.

For his achievement in fine arts he was awarded with the Ekushey Padak in 1982; the Bangladesh Charu Shilpi Sangsad Award in 1986; and the Independence Day Award in 1993.[2] His works are held in several major collections in Bangladesh, including the Bangladesh National Museum, the National Art Gallery (Bangladesh), the SM Sultan Memorial Museum, and the Bengal Foundation.

Source: Wikipedia

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## CHECK THE FACTS!

A couple of days ago, a certain late night talk show on Desh TV caught my attention. The subject was bringing student politics to private universities, which has been the talk of the town for a couple of days now. The panelists included the former president of Chhatra Union. During the conversation, he brought up how the protest against VAT on Education was led by his party. This is where I begged to defer. The VAT movement was first established by the students of University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh (ULAB). It was led by students who don't come from any political background. After a couple of days of protesting, the movement spread onto other private universities. As far as I know, even after that, there was no political involvement. So my request would be to the former president to get his facts checked before making such statements. Taking credit for something which wasn't theirs is not expected from our future leaders.

*Nasib Ahsan  
ULAB, Dhaka*



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

## THE DARK SIGHTS OF SUHRAWARDY UDYAN

Last Friday, I met my university friends at Suhrawardy Udyana after almost a decade. During our days at University of Dhaka, we rarely missed a single day to hang out at that place. Sometimes we used to gather there for study purposes, other times just as a pastime. But, the recent visit made me very upset. What I found is that, the prior environment of Suhrawardy Udyana has entirely changed. It can easily be said that it has become a sanctuary for the vagabonds, drug addicts, hawkers or even prostitutes. I have read several times in different news media that my favourite uddyana is becoming an unsafe place for the common people. But, observing it with my own eyes has depressed me. I never thought this great place; our historical 'Race Course Maidan' would become such an insecure place. Like others, I have heard that government is very careful about such issues, but I haven't found anything noticeable. We all are hoping that the prior sights of our beloved Suhrawardy Udyana will be regained soon and people will have a nice and secure place to visit.

*Sabiha Akter Rony  
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