

Malaysia offering discounts on hotels for Bangladeshi arrivals

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : The government of Malaysia is now offering discounts on hotels for all tourist arrivals including Bangladeshis as part of its efforts to increase the tourist numbers and help recover the country's travel industry after reopening to the world on April 1, 2022.

Syed Yahya Syed Othman, Senior Director of the Strategic Planning Division, Tourism Malaysia said this in an interview with The Bangladesh Monitor on the sidelines of the international tourism fair Triplover Dhaka Travel Mart-2022 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on June 2-4.

After reopening following the devastating coronavirus pandemic, the government of Malaysia is providing the tourism industry with incentive, grant, cash money and other support to ensure it revives in a stronger way.

"We are offering 15-20 per cent funding to the industry product owners like hotels to reconstruct their facilities. For the transport sector, we are giving vouchers to support their business. For other tourism subsectors, the government is giving grants or cash money," said the Senior Director of the tourism government body.

Surprisingly, the financial support is not only for industry stakeholders. To encourage people to spend, the Malaysian government is also offering grants to domestic travellers, added the Senior Director.

"For instance, if a hotel room cost is MYR 500, the government would bear MYR 150 of the cost. So, domestic travellers need to pay only MYR 350. Similarly, we are offering grants on air tickets, and shopping outlets," mentioned Othman.

Also to create a tourism atmosphere, it is important to hold events in Malaysia, said the Senior Director. Hence, the government is offering MYR 500 thousand fund to anyone holding domestic tourism event in Malaysia and up to MYR 1 million for any international tourism event, noted Othman.

In total, the government has allocated nearly MYR 100 million for rehabilitation of the tourism industry in 2022, said Othman, adding, they intend to extend it further next year too.

"These are not loans. These are one time grants that we are offering solely to help the country's tourism sector revive," clarified Othman,

For promotional purposes, Tourism Malaysia is currently holding roadshows in their top source markets including Bangladesh. And those following their roadshows will get hotel and air tickets on half the price, courtesy of Tourism Malaysia, expressed Othman.

Speaking of which, Othman mentioned Bangladesh is one of the most important source markets for Malaysia besides Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, India and Brunei.

"In the post-pandemic era, the Malaysian government is focusing on short-haul travel markets such as Bangladesh and India. It takes less than four hours to travel between Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka. The destinations are so near to each other that it is very convenient to visit. You can even arrange short trips to Kuala Lumpur from Dhaka," claimed Othman.

"Bangladeshis are quality tourists. Similarly, we must also ensure quality service to them to get repeat customers from Bangladesh," Othman added.

He further mentioned, before the pandemic, in 2019, 179 thousand Bangladeshis, came to Malaysia. Once, the number was 204 thousand even. Usually, Bangladeshi tourists stay in Malaysia for six nights and they have a practice of shopping a lot.

"We started 2022 with zero arrivals. By the end of 2022, we expect to have 8-10 per cent of the pre-pandemic tourist arrival numbers which was 28 million," said Othman.

Besides tourists, Othman shared, international students from Bangladesh and other countries is another segment Malaysia focuses on. After reopening, that was the first segment the country focused on. Then, came house tourism. Then the country prioritized niche products like rafting, golfing, boating, cruise, repelling and others which are popular among young people and families. Later, the country opened to leisure with attractive air ticket and hotel price.

Besides studies, Malaysia is also renowned for medical tourism. Most of the doctors of Malaysia studied overseas specially in the UK, and USA. Nurses are well-trained too. Hospitals have all ultramodern equipment.

It may be mentioned here, open heart surgery costs MYR 50-70 thousand while full body check-ups cost less than MYR 1000.

Since medical travel to Malaysia is such a big hit, the government has formed a special department to look after medical tourism - Malaysia healthcare tourism department.

All parts of Malaysia are currently open to tourists with no restriction in place. Vaccinated travellers are not required to quarantine. But unvaccinated travellers are required to quarantine at home for five days.

Also, Malaysia currently is not offering e-visas to Bangladeshis. From July, the country will again start offering e-visas to India, which will be followed by other

countries including Bangladesh.

"To make our regional tourism flourish further and come out as a winner in the post-pandemic times, Bangladesh and Malaysia can work together but need to be creative with respective efforts," said Othman.

He explained, Bangladesh can be a great transit hub for Malaysians travelling to India and Kolkata. Likewise, tourists from Bangladesh can stay in Malaysia for 3 nights during transit before travelling to Australia or Japan.

Joint cross-border packages like these will work wonders as tourists now prefer to visit multiple countries in one trip, concluded Senior Director of Tourism Malaysia.