

Policy support essential for further investment in tourism : Experts

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Dhaka : The government must provide policy support including tax breaks to attract domestic and foreign investments for developing tourist spots across the country, said tourism experts.

Bangladesh is called the "Unique Delta of Seven Tourist Attractions (7TA)" and large investments are needed to develop the country's tourist attractions, said Abu Sufian, Editor of Travel Magazine Vromon, at a seminar on December 21.

The seven tourist attractions include river, sea, mountain, forest, history-heritage-culture, seasonal variation and hospitality, he said at the seminar titled "Post-Covid-19 Tourism: Key Tools to achieve the SDGs in Bangladesh."

The theme of the tenth edition of the seminar, organised by the Social Development Foundation (SDF) under the Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of finance and Vromon, was "Tourism: A Penalty Shoot for the Economy of Bangladesh."

Abu Sufian said Bangladesh aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Out of the 17 SDGs, six are related to tourism. The implementation of SDGs will be hindered if the tourism sector is not developed.

"There are 22 airports in our country. We are using seven of them only. These should be renovated and brought back into operation," he added.

Urging the private sector to invest in the tourism sector, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali said, "An investment-friendly environment has been created in this sector. Investing here will be profitable."

He said, "Some incentives are needed in this sector. Investment is not coming to this sector due to excessive taxes. This was discussed in our ministry on December 20. There is a need to reduce taxes to increase investment. We are working on it."

Md Mokammel Hossain, Secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry, said, "We have some problems related to infrastructure. A tourism master plan for infrastructure development is being developed. We have identified 1,051 tourist spots, 51 of which are being given importance. The master plan will be finalised in March 2023."

The tourism sector accounts for 3.02 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP, while globally this sector contributes 10.3 per cent of the global GDP, he added.

Addressing the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry, Planning Minister M A Mannan said, a large number of local tourists visit Ratargul, Bichnakandi, Kuakata, and Tanguar Haor areas. Food and water supply for tourists, and places to change clothes after bathing are needed there.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave directions to set up facilities to enable mothers to breastfeed their children at the tourist spots, but the

civil aviation and tourism ministry has not taken any such project in more than three years since the direction was given," he said adding that "I urge you to come up with such projects. The government will provide money for their implementation."