

Country's tourism businesses face another depressing Eid amid pandemic

A Monitor Report

Date: 16 May, 2021



Dhaka : The tourism industry of Bangladesh has passed another gloomy Eid for the second consecutive year, with tourism hotspots closed amid a countrywide lockdown over a second wave of coronavirus.

About four million people directly or indirectly involved in the sector, stare at uncertain times with the hope for better days in the future, said Md Rafeeuzzaman, President of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh.

People working in the sector are now looking for government support to weather the crisis caused by the countrywide lockdown imposed following the corona pandemic, said Rafee, adding, the industry is near to lose BDT 57 billion in revenue due to the crisis.

After the country had gone into the first lockdown over the pandemic in March last year, the tourism sector began reopening in August following a standard operating procedure, or SOP, made by Bangladesh Tourism Board.

The hotels and other businesses in the industry then started foreseeing a recovery coming in their way soon as travellers began to return to the tourism hotspots after

being home-quarantined for a long time.

Unfortunately, the industry was again hit by the second wave of the coronavirus by the end of March this year, and tourism was the first to close down. Then a countrywide lockdown was imposed in the first week of April.

"We are waiting for the pandemic situation to normalise before we can reopen the industry," said Rafeuzzaman.

Khabir Uddin Ahmed, President of Tourism Resort Industries Association of Bangladesh (TRIAB), also expressed his frustration about the uncertainties of tourism they are facing currently.

"If [the industry] does not reopen soon, we will have to leave this trade of business and seek some other work," Ahmed sighed.

Bangladesh International Hotel Association, an organisation of 45 three to five-star hotel owners of Bangladesh, claimed they lost "BDT 10 billion" to the crisis that followed the pandemic so far.

"All the hotels in the country are empty," said Mohsin Hoq Himel, Secretary General, TRIAB. He further mentioned his worries that he does not see things looking up even in post Eid as the government again imposed a new lockdown from May 16 till another week to curb the spread of the virus.

"The sector is almost ruined. The hotel employees have no work. Some hotels are helping their employees survive, but the others cannot," he added.

Mohsin, along with TOAB President Rafeuzzaman and TRIAB President Khabir, claimed the tourism industry did not get any help from the government's BDT 300 billion stimulus package for the services sector.

Rafeuzzaman urged the government to consider giving stimulus packages to the tourism industry as well to save the industry from the brink of extinction.

He even called for soft loans, if a stimulus package is not announced for the sector.

Mohsin shared those running businesses with bank loans are in more danger as they cannot repay the loan installments back in this crisis.

"Many of us may try to recover if the government arranges loans for us on easy terms and conditions under the package," he said.

On the other hand, Mohammad Saiful Hasan, Deputy Director of Bangladesh Tourism Board, said, the government will think about reopening the sector when the situation "normalises". He said it is impossible to reopen as long as health risks remain.