

Sri Lanka assures uninterrupted travel for Bangladeshis despite global crisis

- A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Travel to Sri Lanka remains fully unaffected for Bangladeshi tourists despite ongoing global conflicts and economic uncertainties, said Buddhika Hewawasam, Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor during a media networking session held at Le Meridien Dhaka on April 5.

He said, the Sri Lankan government has given special priority to the tourism sector to ensure uninterrupted services for visitors. "There is no energy crisis affecting hotels, transport, or tourism-related services. Tourists will not face any disruption, and there has been no increase in hotel or service rates," he claimed.

However, he noted that the only cost increase travelers may notice is in airfares.

Echoing this, Fawzan Fareid, Regional Manager (India, Bangladesh, and Nepal) of SriLankan Airlines, said that airlines have been compelled to raise ticket prices due to rising global fuel costs.

"Like other airlines worldwide, we have added a fuel surcharge of around USD 30 - USD 15 each way - on the Dhaka-Colombo route," he said, attributing the increase to volatility in fuel prices following disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

Despite this, he highlighted strong connectivity between the two countries, with SriLankan Airlines operating daily flights and FitsAir running four weekly services. He added that the airline provides additional passenger support upon arrival in Sri Lanka and caters to diverse traveler needs, including halal food and large group travel.

The media networking session was aimed at strengthening tourism ties between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

During the event, Hewawasam revealed that around 60,000 Bangladeshi tourists visited Sri Lanka last year, making it the 10th source market, while 10,000 have already travelled this year. He expressed hope that the figure could reach 100,000 by the end of the year, with Bangladesh having the potential to become one of Sri Lanka's top five source markets.

He encouraged Bangladeshi travelers to explore a broader range of tourism offerings, including adventure travel, underwater activities, hiking, and hillside experiences, alongside traditional leisure tourism. Sri Lanka, he added, is also emerging as a preferred destination for weddings, solo travel, and medical tourism, supported by improved facilities and international recognition.

Presiding over the session, Dharmapala Weerakkody, High Commission of Sri Lanka to Bangladesh, highlighted the strong potential for enhanced tourism cooperation between the two countries, describing such initiatives as key to future industry growth.

Also speaking at the event, Mohammad Rafeeuzzaman, President of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh, welcomed the initiative but raised concerns over high airfares, ranging from BDT 55,000 to BDT 75,000, which he said remain a barrier for many travelers. He also called for reconsideration of visa-on-arrival facilities in place of the

current ETA system, which costs USD 20, whereas the former did not cost anything earlier.

The program concluded with an interactive session between media representatives and tourism stakeholders, focusing on connectivity, travel facilities, and future collaboration opportunities.

An exclusive B2B roadshow and networking evening for tourism trade partners was held on April 6 at the same venue, bringing together industry leaders, media professionals, and a high-level Sri Lankan delegation.