

Sri Lanka to promote Colombo as South Asian tourism hub

A Monitor Report

Date: 16 June, 2021



Colombo : Sri Lanka has announced to develop a 'city tourism' strategy to place Colombo as a tourism hub in the South Asian map.

This initiative will follow some of the best practices of national tourist boards in Singapore, Thailand, Dubai and others, to strategically implement forward thinking policies and uplift the family entertainment sector through the easing of taxation for luxury brands, development of locations and provision of international entertainment venues and facilities.

The city tourism or urban tourism strategy will also focus on developing and enabling Colombo to host high-quality international events that are globally proven to be a success in city marketing and branding.

On this occasion, Tourism Minister of Sri Lanka Prasanna Ranathunge, commented, "Keeping in line with the vision of the government to make Colombo a tourism hub, we have taken some proactive steps to make this a reality."

"Last year, the budget announced some great tax benefits to encourage international luxury brands to make a presence in the Sri Lankan market. We have seen shopping as a key motivator for intra-regional travel and having brands that can pull international visitors is a key component in our strategy."

"Whilst ensuring that we protect all our local brands, we identified a way to make

those international brands more competitive than in other parts of Asia and thereby provide a compelling reason for regional tourists to visit Colombo," she added.

Sri Lanka Tourism Chairperson Kimarli Fernando, said, "In most developed tourism destinations, city-based tourism plays a very critical role in attracting international visitors."

"While this trend of 'high-quality event promotion' is very visible in Europe and America, it is also highly evident in advanced Asian tourism destinations such as Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, etc as well. With the addition of the Port City making Colombo a business hub, it is imperative that we now develop Colombo as a city tourism hub."

Fernando also noted, "At present, less than 35 per cent of the tourists arriving in Sri Lanka visit Colombo. We have also seen the trend of increased visitors from India and the region in the last few years. This will make Colombo an ideal tourism hub for shopping, family entertainment, great food and beverage experiences along with MICE tourism, once the world is conducive for travel, post the effects of Covid-19."

"This strategy is expected to welcome an additional two million tourists within the next five years, enabling us to reach the targeted USD 7.5 billion earnings from tourism at the end of the five-year global tourism promotional campaign period," he expressed.