

Tourism must generate responsibility, not just revenue : Shafat Uddin Tomal

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Dhaka : For Syed Shafat Uddin Ahmed Tomal, tourism is not merely an industry - it is a national responsibility. The CEO of Market n-Trance Holidays has spent 17 years championing sustainable and educational tourism in Bangladesh, positioning travel not only as an economic driver but as a platform for environmental protection and awareness.

Recently recognized as the Leading Tourism Entrepreneur at the Bangladesh Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Awards 2025, Tomal views the accolade as more than a personal achievement.

"This recognition is deeply humbling," he said while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor. "It validates a journey driven not by profit alone, but by purpose - to position tourism as a force for environmental protection, education, and national pride."

According to Tomal, the award reflects a broader transformation within Bangladesh's tourism landscape. The country, home to the ecologically critical Sundarbans - the world's largest mangrove forest - is increasingly aligning tourism with climate resilience and conservation priorities.

From fragility to responsibility

Tomal's inspiration for sustainable tourism emerged early in his career while witnessing both the beauty and vulnerability of Bangladesh's natural ecosystems, particularly the Sundarbans.

"I realized tourism could either harm or protect these ecosystems depending on how it was practiced," he noted. "Tourism must not only generate revenue; it must generate awareness and responsibility."



In one of Bangladesh's most climate-vulnerable contexts, he argues, tourism development must educate visitors about biodiversity, climate change, and conservation - transforming them into long-term environmental advocates rather than short-term consumers.

Educating next generation

A defining component of Tomal's work has been engaging more than 5,000 children in eco-tourism and biodiversity awareness initiatives. These programs expose young participants to conservation principles, wildlife protection, and sustainable travel practices.

"The real impact is not immediate," he explained. "It unfolds over time through behavioral change and future leadership."

Feedback from schools and communities suggests many participants have become conservation advocates within their families. Some have even pursued higher education in environmental science, wildlife conservation, and sustainable tourism. For Tomal, inspiring even one future conservation leader represents a strategic investment in Bangladesh's environmental security.

Bridging policy and private sector

As a private stakeholder committee member of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Tomal observes steady progress in integrating sustainability into national policy frameworks. He credits the ministry's commitment to conservation and climate adaptation but emphasizes the need for stronger implementation mechanisms and clearer sustainable tourism guidelines.



Tomal practicing and encouraging sustainable and responsible tourism

"Private stakeholders can play a crucial role in innovation, training, and responsible practices," he said. "With stronger coordination between government, industry, and local communities, Bangladesh can develop a globally respected sustainable tourism model."

Academia as catalyst

Beyond business and policy, Tomal underscores the critical role of academic institutions in shaping the future of tourism. As an educator, he believes universities must embed sustainability, climate awareness, and biodiversity conservation into core curricula.

"Universities shape not just skilled professionals, but responsible custodians of our natural and cultural heritage," he said.

He advocates stronger collaboration between academia and industry, allowing students to gain field exposure in community-based tourism and conservation initiatives. Such integration, he believes, ensures sustainability becomes a lifelong professional principle rather than a marketing slogan.

Profitability and principle

Operating in a market often driven by pricing competition and mass tourism presents undeniable challenges. Yet Tomal rejects the notion that sustainability undermines profitability.

"Responsible tourism is not a limitation - it is a long-term competitive advantage," he said.

Global travelers, he observes, increasingly prefer ethical and authentic experiences. At Market n-Trance Holidays, the focus remains on value rather than volume, emphasizing ecosystem protection and high-quality experiences that build long-term trust.

Bangladesh on global stage

With diverse ecosystems ranging from mangrove forests to riverine landscapes and cultural heritage sites, Tomal believes Bangladesh holds extraordinary potential as a sustainable tourism destination.

"Few countries offer such unique ecological and cultural diversity," he noted. "With the right policies, infrastructure, and global promotion, tourism can become a major contributor to Bangladesh's economy and international image."

Community integration forms the cornerstone of his tourism model. By engaging local boat operators, guides, and hospitality providers, tourism revenue remains within communities, creating alternative livelihoods and reducing environmentally harmful practices.

"Sustainable tourism succeeds only when local people see value in protecting their natural heritage," he said.