

Inclusive Tourism Sector Strategies to Support Post-Pandemic Recovery

In collaboration with The World Bank Group

The pandemic and its impacts have been unprecedented in almost all aspects. The tourism, travel and various sub-sectors in hospitality space have been particularly hit. By 6 April 2020, 96% of destinations worldwide had introduced travel restrictions bringing tourism to almost a complete halt (UNWTO 2020). Due to these travel restrictions, Pakistan's hotel industry has reported colossal losses with bookings dropping to 40% (TRAC 2020) in comparison to pre-pandemic levels. The issue is how Pakistan can position itself in a manner that recovery in this sector is fast and inclusive. Furthermore, sustainability concerns in the tourism industry are also emerging, such as operational issues and how tourism assets such as information centres, tourist police, public restrooms and other enabling infrastructure can be maintained. This may also require some private sector-driven solutions to ensure quality. In this background, there is an opportunity to provide policy recommendations for the federal government's mid-year review of fiscal year 2020-21, along with budget proposals. The panellists will highlight:

1. Evolving challenges faced by the tourism sector and support required as incidence of the pandemic gets prolonged (or there is delay in medical solutions);
2. How Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and related stakeholders in the tourism sector can be better equipped for dealing with future disasters in a resilient manner;
3. Managing operational issues in the tourism sector and development of new tourism assets;
4. The combined role of government, non-government, and development partner organisations in supporting this sector (and strengthened role of Public-Private Partnerships);
5. A focus on the roles and responsibilities of provincial governments, and how their policies, budgets and tactical measures could help.

The panel hopes to bring together influential representation from the private and public sectors that are major stakeholders in Pakistan's tourism sector. Moreover, it will help devise clear-cut policy recommendations/strategies for the survival and revival of the tourism sector that will ultimately play a role in revitalising Pakistan's economy in 2021 and providing jobs.

References

TRAC 2020, 'Strategy to Help Mitigate the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 on Pakistan's Tourism Industry', Tourism Recovery Action Committee, National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB), <http://www.tourism.gov.pk/publications/strat_covid.pdf>.

UNWTO 2020, 'COVID-19 Response: 96% of Global Destinations Impose Travel Restrictions, UNWTO Reports,' UN World Tourism Organization, 17 April, <<https://www.unwto.org/news/covid-19-response-travel-restrictions>>.

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