

New normal digital era of travel demands OTAs

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Dhaka : The panelists in the second panel discussion of the seminar on Online Travel Agencies, organised by The Bangladesh Monitor, shed light on the possible contributions OTAs can make to usher in a new normal travel era-an era more digitised, as well as convenient and seamless.

The panelists were--Rahat Ahmed, CEO of Anchorless Bangladesh, Faisal M Fateh Ul-Islam, Head of E-commerce and M-commerce, Eastern Bank Limited, Shafiqul Islam, General Manager, Amadeus GTD Bangla Private Ltd, Yami M Saleh, Managing Director of Saimon Group, and Mohamed Alhammadi, Country Manager of Emirates Bangladesh.

Rahat Ahmed emphasised how travel contributes greatly to the economy as it has a long supply chain. And OTAs bring all kinds of travel services from providers to the end consumers. To further bolster the trade and facilitate the industry as a whole, Rahat stressed on prioritising domestic tourism for the middle-class income group. Also, after tying up with OTAs for promotions, banks have been receiving massive response from the customers, said Faisal M Fateh from EBL. About 20 million customers are actively looking for deals a month, he added. This proves how OTAs can get to a wider audience and banks are always on alert to support such value

addition works.

Shafiqul Islam, General Manager, from Amadeus Bangladesh, pinpointed how OTAs are creating a new segment in Bangladesh travel market. This has resulted in a higher number of consumers as well as demand among local agents for API.

Even though, there lie a few challenges for the OTAs in the country, but Yami M Saleh, who is also the MD of Tryotel Travels Ltd assured that the challenges are narrowing down while the scopes are broadening. "OTAs need to focus more on contents. There remain some hotels and tour operators which are not yet present online. OTAs have to bring them in their system as well in order to provide complete solutions to the consumers," Yami noted.

Concluding the second panel discussion, Mohamed Alhammadi, Country Manager of Emirates said, "Emirates is offering NDC enabled direct connect platform for travel agents. In order to facilitate drive in the economy, our partners play a huge role in delivering what we have to offer to the passengers. Thus, Emirates is always in effort to offer its benefits directly to the end users by collaborating with trade partners including OTAs."