

Tourism starts to pick up by year end

A Monitor Report

Date: 01 January, 2023



Dhaka : By the end of 2022, as the country's main travel season winter arrived, tourist spots across the country were seen filled with both domestic and foreign travellers. Even though domestic travel had surpassed pre-pandemic levels long ago, this was the first time since the pandemic, inbound travel began picking up considerably. This has put a smile on the faces of the country's inbound tourism stakeholders as they now see hopes of inbound travel booming in 2023.

Taufiq Rahman, CEO of Journey Plus, speaking to The Bangladesh Monitor, said, inbound traveller groups finally started coming to Bangladesh from October-November 2022.

By December 2022, Taufiq had hosted a group of 26 British travellers as well as groups of Swedish and Indian travellers, each 10-15 persons, he mentioned.

Also, FIT travel started gaining momentum from 2022 end, rejoiced Taufiq.

"However, the numbers are not yet significant, yet, we can breathe a sigh of relief as finally inbound tourism has at least started picking up," added Taufiq.

In January 2023, Taufiq mentioned to have already received bookings by groups from Australia, Norway and the United Kingdom. That is a sign of progress, claimed Taufiq.

He shared his hopes that inbound tourism will again boom in 2023. However, for this purpose, the Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry as well as the two national tourism organisations Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and Bangladesh Tourism Board must run effective promotional campaigns in the international arena, he suggested.

They must step up their efforts to further brand and market the country as an ideal destination to visit, Taufiq claimed.

Also, the government must ramp up marketing initiatives to highlight that Bangladesh is welcoming tourists with open arms without any travel restriction, he further mentioned.

It is a positive news that Bangladesh is participating in the largest international travel fairs to further attract inbound travellers to the country that has plenty of untapped tourism potentials.

However, these will not be enough to revive the inbound tourism industry of the country, explained Taufiq, urging the government to organise roadshows, and invite travel journalists as part of more advanced marketing initiatives.

In February-March 2023, Taufiq foresees the inbound tourist numbers will further rise and even more in September-October 2023, hoping the new year will finally mark the boom of inbound tourism in these post-pandemic times.

Coming back to December 2022, room bookings in different popular tourist spots of the country reached 90 per cent, according to hospitality service providers.

The trend is expected to continue until the end of January 2023, they

added.

Industry insiders also mentioned December usually witnesses the highest turnout because many families go on holidays in this month as their children's schools are closed for the winter break or annual term end purposes.

Besides, Bangladeshi citizens who live abroad return during the month and visit different tourist spots as well.

In 2022, the increased turnout provided tourism and hospitality service providers with good business. In turn, it increased their contribution to the economy.

The tourism sector accounted for 3 per cent of the country's gross domestic product in fiscal 2018-19, as per the Tourism Satellite Account 2020 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Additionally, the sector accounted for 8 per cent of the total employment in 2018-2019.

"The response this winter season is quite good as there is a lot of enthusiasm among travellers. Our room occupancy is over 90 per cent," said Prasenjit Guha Thakurta, group general manager of Seagull Hotel in Cox's Bazar, the main holiday destination in Bangladesh.

After the school and college level exams end in November, many Bangladeshis living abroad, namely the EU and US, return home for vacation. "As a result, there is too much traffic now," he added.

Abdul Awal, Director for Sales and Marketing at Sea Pearl Beach Resort and Spa in Cox's Bazar, said compared to December 2021, they had a higher number of room bookings in 2022.