

Balancing legacy, innovation: Asif Ahmed steering Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka into new era

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Dhaka : As Bangladesh's hospitality sector gradually stabilized and recalibrated itself in 2025, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka - widely regarded as the country's one of the oldest five-star hotel - once again demonstrated why it remains a cornerstone of luxury hospitality. At the helm during a challenging yet transformative period was Asif Ahmed, Acting General Manager, whose reflections on the outgoing year revealed a careful balancing act between resilience, reinvention, and respect for heritage.

Looking back, Ahmed described 2025 as a year of recovery marked by determination. While the first half of the year was overshadowed by lingering socio-political uncertainties, the hotel's performance in terms of occupancy, revenue and guest satisfaction remained steady.

"Our team showed remarkable resilience," he noted, adding that

consistent service quality and brand trust helped the hotel navigate a complex operating environment. Guest feedback and industry assessments, he said, reaffirmed Sonargaon's enduring reputation as one of Bangladesh's most reliable five-star hospitality landmarks.

Beyond numbers, 2025 was also a year of reaffirming identity. As the hotel celebrated its legacy, it was increasingly recognized not just as a place to stay, but as a living part of Dhaka's cultural fabric.

Media coverage highlighted Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka as a symbol of the country's hospitality evolution, while the hotel continued to host high-profile diplomatic delegations, international investors, and visiting heads of state - including the President of Timor-Leste. Its long-standing association with Bangladesh Cricket, serving as the official hospitality partner for national and visiting teams, further strengthened its stature.

Operationally, the year saw important upgrades. Digital enhancements to the booking system improved guest convenience, while the hotel maintained its leadership in catering and large-scale events - an area where Sonargaon has long been considered unmatched. Ahmed credited this to the strength of the food and beverage production teams and meticulous planning by catering sales professionals, which allowed the hotel to retain its dominance in Dhaka's meetings and banqueting segment.

Market dynamics in 2025 demanded agility. Corporate travel, MICE demand, and leisure tourism, each required distinct strategies. As Dhaka continued to grow as a regional business hub, the hotel sharpened its focus on corporate guests through tailored packages, upgraded executive lounge services and long-stay offerings. Strategic partnerships with multinational companies and diplomatic missions ensured recurring business.



At the same time, MICE remained a powerful growth engine. Investments in conference infrastructure and the promotion of signature venues - most notably the lush, open-air Oasis, which blends nature with modern facilities - helped position Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka as the city's premier destination for international conferences and high-profile social events.

Leisure travel, too, received renewed attention. Ahmed pointed to the hotel's cultural positioning as a heritage-rich landmark, complemented by enhanced wellness offerings, dining experiences and collaborations with tour operators. A notable highlight was the launch of the hotel's first-ever Grand Eid Festival Fair, which introduced a vibrant shopping and entertainment experience for Dhaka residents and visitors alike.

Sustainability and innovation were another key focus. Ahmed emphasized that environmental responsibility is no longer optional in luxury hospitality - it is essential. During the year, the hotel transitioned to energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems, reduced single-use plastics across its outlets and strengthened waste segregation and recycling practices. Plans are also underway for a rooftop garden, the use of hotel-grown herbs in menus and expanded tree plantation across the property.



Behind the scenes, people development remained a strategic priority. In an industry grappling with talent retention, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka focused on empowerment, structured career pathways and continuous learning. Training partnerships, wellness initiatives, recognition programs and inclusive leadership practices helped foster

engagement and reduce attrition, ensuring service excellence remained uncompromised.

In an increasingly competitive market, differentiation has become more critical than ever. Ahmed believes Sonargaon's strength lies in its experienced workforce, prime location, strong brand equity and ability to personalize guest experiences. Culinary innovation, wellness offerings and unique venues like Oasis continue to set the hotel apart, with several new initiatives already in the pipeline.

Looking ahead to 2026, Ahmed is cautiously optimistic about Bangladesh's hospitality and tourism outlook. He anticipates gradual growth driven by rising disposable incomes, infrastructure development, and renewed travel momentum following the national elections. Domestic tourism, digital transformation and government-led infrastructure projects are expected to play defining roles in shaping the sector's future.

For Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka, the coming year will be about sustaining legacy while embracing change. Planned renovations, new dining concepts, upgraded wellness facilities and expanded event spaces aim to elevate the guest experience further. One particularly exciting prospect is the hotel's plan to operate its own Airport Lounge at the newly constructed Terminal 3 of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport - extending the Sonargaon experience beyond the hotel premises.

As he welcomed 2026, Ahmed's message was one of gratitude and optimism. He acknowledged the long-standing support of guests, partners, and stakeholders who have journeyed alongside the hotel for over four decades. "Together," he said, "we can position Bangladesh as a world-class destination - where tradition meets modernity, and every guest leaves with a truly memorable hotel experience."