

Country's resorts are flourishing : Dusai MD

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Dhaka : Bangladeshi travellers are currently unable to go to their preferred outbound destinations like Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Kathmandu and Bali amid the coronavirus pandemic. This led to a boom in domestic travel across the country, particularly benefiting the resorts.

Nasser Rahman, Managing Director, Dusai Hotel and Resorts Ltd said this while speaking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the capital recently.

Luxury resorts like Dusai in Srimangal Road, Moulvi Bazar experienced huge growth in occupancy amid the coronavirus pandemic as travel enthusiasts could not go to outbound destinations, hence turned to resorts in popular domestic tourist destinations like Srimangal, Cox's Bazar and Sylhet for staycations.

"From August 2020 to April 2021, we've had great business with an occupancy of 28-35 per cent," said Nasser Rahman, Managing Director, Dusai Hotel and Resorts, mentioning, such amount of occupancy is great for resorts.

"Compared to pre-pandemic times, the business growth has been very substantial, 40-50 per cent."

Since Dusai is a luxury niche resort with 71 rooms and 220 guest capacity, it offers an intimate atmosphere for families and couples, he added.

However, what harmed us the most was the lockdowns imposed by the government, claimed Nasser, during which they had to keep the resort closed.

We missed many good seasons of business, and suffered much revenue losses.

There had been zero income during the lockdowns, sighed Nasser, saying, it became difficult to pay his staff salaries, which amounts up to BDT 30 lac alone, while the resort was closed.

Now the coronavirus is here to stay for some time, foresees Nasser, and lockdown is not the solution, he stressed. "Instead, we must vaccinate as much people as possible before the coming winter when there is a possibility of another wave emerging."

Resorts cannot afford to miss the coming winter season - the best months for business - owing to lockdowns.

Since reopening from August 10 after the government lifted the last lockdown, Dusai Hotel and Resorts has been getting quite a response.

There has been a pent-up demand for travel as people were stuck in their homes for months during the lockdowns, said Nasser. As soon as the lockdowns were lifted, the resort began welcoming guests again. Gradually, the business is picking up, said Nasser while having eyes set at the coming winter season, December 2021 to March 2022.

Currently, Dusai is running multiple promotions to attract domestic travellers. There is a full board package including breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Then they have another comprehensive package that includes transport from Dhaka even. It is for minimum four persons, either a family or two couples, at BDT 21,310 per couple per night with superior room.

Also, Dusai is currently offering 50 per cent discount on room rates while the average room rate at the resort is BDT 9500-9800 without vat and service charge.

Until Bangladesh moves out of the red list and goes to amber or green, outbound travel will remain suspended. Meanwhile, there is no alternative to domestic travel, said Nasser. It will take at least two more years for everything to be normal, he added.

To offset the losses incurred during the lockdowns, the government stimulus, mainly bank loan, is not a viable option, expressed Nasser. Taking loans at a lower interest only to keep the resorts closed during lockdowns will only harm the hotels and resorts further, he stressed.

Hence, if the government offered grants to affected industries of travel and hospitality, it would have been more of a help. Nevertheless, if all else fails, allowing the resorts to remain open, no further lockdowns, and rapid vaccination rollout - should be enough to help us recover and sustain in the days ahead, concluded the Managing Director of Dusai.