

Making BD virus free crucial to bring foreign guests at hotels

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Dhaka : The only way for the hotel industry to survive now is rapid vaccination rollout countrywide. This will make the country virus free. As a result, flights will reopen and foreign business travellers will be safe coming to Bangladesh. Only then business hotels like White Palace will be able to survive the ongoing crisis.

Md Jahangir Hossain Sohag, General Manager of White Palace Hotel said this while speaking to The Bangladesh Monitor recently.

Sohag joined White Palace on April 1, 2021 during the lockdown imposed to curb the coronavirus spread. At that time, flights were closed and there were zero guests at the hotel, mentioned Sohag.

To stay afloat, Sohag reached the hospitals and managed to accommodate the frontliners of the country like doctors and nurses. Out of the 48 rooms of White Palace, 25-30 rooms were occupied by doctors and nurses of different hospitals of the country.

However, after sometime, frontliners no longer needed to stay isolated. Hence again the hotel turned back to zero occupancy. ❌

Afterwards, again, Sohag as a survival measure managed White Palace to be quarantine enlisted for incoming foreigners. White Palace then received incoming quarantine guests from the UK, Middle East and Asia.

However, since most of the quarantine guests were our remittance fighters, Sohag said, White Palace supported the labors by only charging whatever they could afford to pay.

Later, the hotel quarantine phase passed too and left the hotel with zero occupancy again.

We cannot survive like this. If this goes on, many hotels will close their doors in the next six months, expressed Sohag.

Hotels like White Palace has a monthly expenditure of 60 lac taka. It has 55 staff. But there is no guest. The revenue is zero right now, sighed the General Manager. Therefore, quick vaccination rollout to make the country virus free withing the next 2-3 months is crucial. Only then flights will resume and foreign business travellers will come in. That's how hotels can welcome guests. There is no other way, claimed Sohag.

India and China are key markets for incoming business travel. There is not much movement from these countries to Bangladesh over virus concerns. Hence, we must facilitate travel from these countries to Bangladesh by making the country virus free, Sohag addressed.

Once guests come in, they will take accommodation at the hotels, they will eat at the restaurants, they will take car services, laundry services, avail all the facilities there is, said Sohag.

White Palace does not compromise on safety, noted Sohag. The entire hotel and its facilities - from rooms to lobby to restaurants to cars - everything is regularly disinfected, he added.

Unfortunately, the hotel industry did not receive any support from the government amid the pandemic. He claimed the utility bills alone amount to 3-4 lac taka for a business boutique hotel like White Palace. Hence, the government could at least waive the utility bills for some time, Sohag urged.