

Pan Pacific Sonargaon hotel gains profit amid pandemic

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : In the last two years, hotels countrywide went through a rocky journey with many ups and downs following subsequent lockdowns imposed by the government to curb the spread of coronavirus. However, even during this hardship the hospitality industry faced, renowned hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka became the first to reach operating profit, thanks to being the preferred choice for cricket teams, dignitaries and long staying guests for the hotel's world class healthy safety precautions.

From June 10-22, 2020, a Chinese group arrived in the country and worked with the Bangladesh ministry of health to prepare a plan of tackling the coronavirus pandemic. Observing Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel's zero tolerance on health safety violation prior to their arrival, the group selected the hotel to host their stay in the country. And the hotel certainly delivered to their expectations. This was followed by the stay of many more groups in the coming months.

Asif Ahmed, Acting General Manager of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor at his office in the hotel premise recently. Ahmed mentioned, from September to November 2020, the hotel hosted stays of many cricket teams competing for local tournaments as Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel is the hospitality partner of BCB.

All the players had individual rooms and dedicated covid-19 negative staff at their service. "Our commitment to Covid-19 health safety measures is uncompromisable. This makes us the preferred choice of hotel for everyone," said Asif Ahmed.

Moreover, the hotel is also the hospitality partner of ICC. Hence, Pan Pacific Sonargaon got to host the stay of the West Indies cricket team in January 2021. Similarly, they kept on welcoming international cricket teams of Ireland and Sri Lanka to a safe stay at the hotel.

It is to be mentioned here, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel was also privileged to host stays of the Prime Ministers of India and Sri Lanka and dinner for the Prime Minister of Bhutan in 2020 when they came to visit the country in celebration of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu.

"These opportunities led us to reach operating profit from October 2020 to March 2021, making us the first and possibly the only hotel to do so amid the pandemic," said the Acting General Manager.

"We have prioritised the health safety protocols the most, which are of international standard. All the international guests, players and dignitaries before arriving at our hotel check our standard of health safety which has always been satisfactory to them."

"We have brought in touchless digital thermal scanners from Singapore, digital hand sanitizers, electric disinfection sprays, queues to maintain social distancing etc. Even at the reception, we have put shields to sperate our staff from the guests," claimed Asif Ahmed.

However, the acting general manage expressed grief that they had to close the hotel again from April till August following the resurgence of the second coronavirus wave in India which affected our country as well. This again made the hotel suffer and left it behind in terms of business growth.

Yet, the hotel did not remain idle during this closure. They have done many renovations in the meantime, shared the acting general manager, that includes renovating works on the health club, Jhorna restaurant and the hotel's annex building of Saudia.

After reopening from August 10, the business is gradually promisingly picking up which indicates growth in the coming days.

"We are eyeing to reach operating profit again by October this year, subject to vaccination rollout across the country and increase of flights to and from Bangladesh," noted the General Manager.

The most important thing in the hospitality industry as Ahmed mentioned is people's confidence on the hotels. By maintaining all health guidelines in compliance with the government and WHO, and offering world class safety protocols, Pan Pacific Sonargaon is always in efforts to bring that confidence back of people, claimed the acting general manager.

Notably, lion share of the hotel staff have been vaccinated with double doses already, further bolstering Pan Pacific Sonargaon's image as one of the safest hotel to enjoy your stay.

During the crisis, long staying guests, mainly project officials from China and Japan, who believed in the hotel's safety standard, helped Pan Pacific Sonargaon to stay afloat. Now the hotel is in efforts to diversify its business by helping the remittance fighters of our country, mentioned Asif Ahmed.

It may be mentioned the hotel is also approved by the government for quarantine. Since the reopening, the F&B and banquet businesses are also receiving great response from the locals thanks to great promotions the hotel is offering, said the general manager, adding, "however we are operating the restaurants and banquet

halls at half the capacity following government's directive as we do not allow any violation in terms of health safety."

Lastly, even though the hotel may gain operating profit again by October as the Acting General Manager informed, it will take till the middle of 2022 to fully recover the opportunity losses, claimed Asif Ahmed.

However, by the next three-four months, Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel will be trying to offset the loss incurred last year by maximum revenue generation, concluded Ahmed.