

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation blessed with 37 Chairmen in 48 years

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Dhaka : In just 48 years since its creation, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), the national tourism organisation of the country, have had 37 chairmen, if tenures of three other persons who were made in-charge are not taken into account.

Despite huge potentials, tourism in Bangladesh continues to have rudder-less existence, primarily because of lack of government commitment.

The government's lack of commitment about development of tourism is well demonstrated by frequent change at the top of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC), the longtime national organisation (NTO) of the country. For example, the recent chairman Ram Chandra Das, after just one year and seven months, was replaced by Mohammad Hannan Mia on February 14, 2021. His service is also not expected to be longer as his retirement is due soon.

Almost same is the situation in Bangladesh Tourism Board-the new NTO since 2010. Albeit no more the only NTO, with all the public sector tourism facilities under control, BPC is still an important organisation in tourism sector. The government has "graced" the organisation with 37 nonprofessional civil and military bureaucrats as its chairman-the chief executive officer, since its formation.

It may be recalled that in 1973, immediately after independence of Bangladesh, BPC was created to develop the country's tourism and exploit its potential.

All the governments of Bangladesh-past and present-transmitted strong signals about their seriousness to put tourism development on right-track and to secure for the country some benefits of the current worldwide tourism boom. But all the promises and assurances were contradicted by not providing professional leadership, adequate funds for the development of tourism infrastructure and promotion of Bangladesh to dispel its negative image.

Very frequent change at the top is the single most important factor for the failure of delivering the goods. The following list gives an insight to the frequent changes at the top of BPC:

- The tenure of the first chairman-late Nurul Qader Khan-was 9 months 15 days, between March 12, 1973 and December 28, 1973.
- The second chairman-late Rafiqullah Choudhury, stayed as chairman of the organisation for the second longest period-3 years 22 days between December 29, 1973 and January 20, 1976.
- Hedayet Ahmed held the position for 11 months 29 days between January 21, 1976 and January 19, 1977.
- Lt Col Khandakar Mahbubur Rahman (Retd) was chairman of BPC for 1 year 1 month 15 days between January 20, 1977 and March 7, 1978.
- Gr Capt ABM Taher Quddus (Retd) was chairman of BPC for 2 years 9 months between March 8, 1978 and December 08, 1980. He was suddenly ousted when he was planning to introduce the Boatel Project to exploit the beauty of riverine Bangladesh.
- Kazi Manzoor-e-Mowla occupied the position of chairman for only 5 month 20 days between December 9, 1980 and May 19, 1981.
- Sayed Ahmed Reza Hussain stayed on the job for 10 months 10 days between May 20, 1981 and March 30, 1982.
- Gr Capt M Shawkatul Islam (Retd) was on the job for 2 years 5 months 2 days between May 1, 1982 and September 3, 1984.
- Col Sayed Shahabuddin Ahmed (Retd) was the longest serving chairman of BPC. Between September 4, 1984 and October 7, 1988, he held the position for 4 years 1 month 3 days. This longest serving chairman ignored development of tourism and focused his attention on duty free operation instead.
- Habibur Rahman stayed as chairman for 2 years 3 months between November 6, 1988 and February 5, 1991.
- Shamsul Islam occupied the chair for 8 months and 9 days between February 6, 1991 and October 15, 1991.
- AMM Nasrullah Khan had to leave within 7 months 20 days between October 16, 1991 and June 05, 1992.
- Bazlur Rahman Choudhury, the 13th chairman of BPC held the position for only 4 months 14 days between June 6, 1992 and October 21, 1992.
- MAR Talukder was chairman of the organisation between October 22, 1992 and February 5, 1993-for only 3 months 14 days. Among the full-fledged chairmen, his tenure was the shortest.
- Col Bazlul Ghani Patwari served the organisation as its chairman for 7 months 24 days between April 12, 1993 and December 5, 1993.
- Maj M Abul Bashar Mia (Retd) was made acting chairman for 2 months 22 days between December 6, 1993 and February 28, 1994.
- Abdus Samad Bhuyan served the organisation as chairman for 1 year 7 months 21 days between March 1, 1994 and October 22, 1995.
- Dr AKA Mubin was made chairman for 1 year 4 months 14 days between October 23, 1995 and March 2, 1997.

- Khandaker Rashidul Haque served the organisation as acting chairman for 2 years 1 month 7 days between March 3, 1997 and April 10, 1999.
- Maj M Abul Bashar Mia (Retd) was made acting chairman for the second time for 4 months 25 days between April 11, 1999 and September 5, 1999.
- Abu Saleh held the position for 1 year 5 months 25 days between September 6, 1999 and January 31, 2001.
- M Abdul Latif Mondal joined the organisation as its 22nd chairman on February 1, 2001. He stayed in the position for 10 months.
- Abdur Razzaque joined BPC on December 6, 2001 and left on January 28, 2003.
- Harunur Rashid Bhuya joined on January 29, 2003 and stayed up to December 11, 2003-less than 11 months.
- Dr Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman graced BPC chair between January 1, 2004 and March 8, 2005. Duration of service is about 14 months.
- Dr Mahfuzul Haque joined on March 20, 2005 and left on November 9, 2006. Duration is 1 year 8 months.
- Mohammad Wajed Ali Khan joined the post on November 12, 2006 and stayed till March 23, 2007. Stayed on the job for only 4 months 11 days.
- Mohammad Hafizur Rahman Bhuya joined on February 12, 2007 and left on March 4, 2008. Stayed in the job little over one year.
- Shafique Al Mehdi joined on March 05, 2008 and stayed up to May 10, 2009. Served BPC for little over 1 year 2 months.
- Mizanur Rahman joined on May 10, 2009 and stayed up to June 29, 2009. The duration of service is 1 month 9 days.
- Mohammad Hamayet Uddin Talukder joined on July 1, 2009 and left on June 30, 2012. Fortunate to stay on the job for nearly three years.
- Mohammad Ehsanul Haque joined on July 08, 2011 and left on 12 September 2012. Duration of service is 1 year 2 months.
- Mohammad Maqsubul Hasan Khan joined on September 23, 2012 and left on August 9, 2014. Stayed on the job for nearly 2 years.
- Dr Aparup Chaudhury joined on August 18, 2014 and left on May 8, 2017. Another fortunate to stay on the job for 2 years 9 months.
- Aktharuzzaman Khan Kabir joined on May 11, 2017 and left on July 21, 2019. Served BPC for 1 year 10 months.
- Ram Chandra Das joined on July 29, 2019 and left on February 14, 2021. Duration of service was 1 year 7 months.
- The current chairman Mohammad Hannan Mia joined on February 14, 2021.

In addition to the above-mentioned chairmen, three other persons also served the organisation as chairmen in charge for short periods.

From the list, it will be found that since its birth, except very few, no one stayed long enough (many of them even could not complete one-year tenure) to learn the trade and lead the organisation effectively.

It is not difficult to realise the negative impact of frequent change, if just one period of BPC's history is analysed. In 12 years following 1991, 15 persons (including two persons who were made in-charge in addition to their own jobs) graced the top position of BPC.

In February 1991, Shamsul Islam, an electrical engineer and Chairman of Power Development Board as the Chairman replaced Habibur Rahman. Shamaul Islam went on retirement in November the same year and AMM Nasrullah Khan, a senior police officer took his place only to be transferred in July 1992. Then, SR Choudhury, a Joint Secretary was made Chairman but again not for long. In November 1992, he was transferred and MAR Talukder, a senior official of Jute

Corporation was appointed Chairman. After little over three months Talukder went on retirement and Aminur Rahman, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism took over. Couple of months' later in April, Col Bazlul Ghani Patwari (Retd) joined as Chairman only to leave the organisation on retirement in the first week of December. Abdus Samad Bhuyan, Dr AKA Mubin followed Col Patwari in quick succession. Khandaker Rashidul Haque stayed as acting chairman for little over two years. He was replaced first by Abu Saleh and then by Abdul Latif Mondal who joined on February 1, 2001. Abdul Latif Mondal was replaced by Abdur Razzaque on December 6, 2001.

Moreover, during their stay, all the past chairmen of BPC, apart from imposing their own ideas in the working of the Corporation, attended a number of trade meetings and conferences overseas. With their departure from the organisation, the experience they acquired benefited none. It was a total waste.

To make BPC more effective, it needs, at its top, a professional with in-depth knowledge in tourism as a whole and Bangladesh tourism sector in particular, as well as with clear vision and mission. To harness the country's much talked tourism potentials the person must be provided with enough authority and time to implement his ideas. Otherwise, BPC will remain as a transit platform for the frequently changing chairmen, without any commitment to their core objectives.