

MoU between cultural affairs, tourism ministries in talks to jointly promote country's archeological tourism

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Dhaka : To truly tap the tourism potential of the country, domestic travel must be made attractive to visitors. Archeological sites always stand as key attractions to travellers all over the world and the same can happen in Bangladesh. However, for this purpose, the cultural affairs and tourism ministries must work together hand-in-hand. State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid said this as the chief guest while addressing the inauguration ceremony of Air Astra Dhaka Travel Mart-2023 held at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka on May 18. KM Khalid further mentioned, "The cultural affairs ministry has 570 archeological establishments under its gazette. However, restoration works at these centuries old sites are yet to take place."

"An MoU, for this purpose, is in talks between the cultural affairs and

tourism ministries of the country," he claimed.

"Also, amid the dollar crisis Bangladesh is suffering from, a large amount of foreign currency can be earned by the country if it manages to attract more foreign tourists as millions of visitors are willing to visit the renowned archeological sites Bangladesh boasts," added the State Minister.

The culture of a country is an integral part of tourism and as such, in many countries, these two entities are combined under one Ministry. This helps in many ways to harness the tourism potential of the country with a strategic marketing plan, said Kazi Wahidul Alam, Editor of The Bangladesh Monitor and organiser of Air Astra Dhaka Travel Mart-2023.

"However, unfortunately, Bangladesh has two different Ministries for cultural affairs and tourism respectively. Hence, the country does not see any concerted effort between the two Ministries in promoting country's rich, cultural and diverse heritages, events and archeological sites, which could attract huge numbers of foreign tourists to the country," further added Kazi Wahidul Alam.

It may be mentioned here, global tourism in terms of tourist arrivals has rebounded to more than 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels in the first quarter of 2023, as per a recent report by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

The surge can be seen in 235 million tourists, who have travelled internationally, more than double, compare to the same period last year.

Bangladesh is also not lagging behind, domestic tourism in the country has surpassed all past records and international tourist arrivals are also registering sharp growth, stressed Kazi Wahidul Alam.

Furthermore, a recent report by the American aircraft manufacturing giant Boeing forecasts air travel in Bangladesh to double in the next decade, driven by the country's growing population and expanding economy.

Bangladesh is expected to achieve an annual economic growth rate of

over 5 per cent, double than the global average, which will support annual air-traffic growth of 8.5 per cent, it added.



"The impact of this growth would certainly help grow the country's fledging tourism industry, as well as the airline sector and we all should prepare ourselves now to take benefits of the growing market demand," expressed Kazi Wahidul Alam.

Md Mokammel Hossain, Secretary for Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism; M Mafidur Rahman, Chairman of Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh; and Rahat Anwar, Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation; also addressed the inauguration ceremony of the biggest tourism extravaganza of the country.

"Bangladesh is privileged and blessed to have all the best tourism products you can find in the world. However, we, all the concerned stakeholders, must promote these tourism products properly, orderly, effectively and jointly to the visitors," said Md Mokammel Hossain, Secretary for Civil Aviation and Tourism.

"The aviation industry, tourism and cultural affairs' ministries all must work together to help country's domestic tourism grow. As 60 per cent of tourism takes place by the air, aviation and tourism complement each other. Therefore, CAAB also has an effective role to play to promote and develop the tourism sector alongside the aviation industry," stressed M Mafidur Rahman, Chairman, CAAB.

Rahat Anwar, Chairman of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation also stressed that the NTO is making maximum efforts to ensure further development of domestic and inbound tourism. For this purpose, the NTO is running projects and campaigns to attract foreign investments into Bangladesh. In this regard, the NTO is working with the Cultural Affairs' ministry too, he also noted.

Imran Asif, CEO of Air Astra; Mahbub Jahan, Director, Planning and Transformation of US-Bangla Airlines; Haznah Md Hashim, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Bangladesh; and Ziaul Karim, Head of Communications and External Affairs of Eastern Bank Ltd; also spoke on

the occasion.