

Thailand to promote halal, medical, family tourism for BD market

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Dhaka: For the Bangladesh market, TAT will continue to position and promote Thailand as “Muslim friendly destination” and focus on medical and family tourist segments once the country reopens borders for leisure travel in the post COVID-19 era.

Vachirachai Sirisumpan, Director – India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, Tourism Authority of Thailand, said this in an interview with The Bangladesh Monitor recently.

TAT also plans to explore any potential market segments in Bangladesh focusing on first timers to Thailand, Sirisumpan added.

In 2019, Thailand welcomed 1,32,800 Bangladeshis, among which 40 per cent was medical tourists while the rest was leisure, shared the Regional Director of TAT.

“Bangladesh is regarded as one of high potential markets to Thailand from South

Asia region. TAT has seen a good growth of tourist arrivals to Thailand at the beginning of this year before the pandemic broke out,” said Sirisumpan.

He further added that in the post COVID-19 era, TAT New Delhi Office which is responsible for Bangladesh will be working more in the market with their travel trade partners and Royal Thai Embassy in Bangladesh to further promote travel to the country.

“In the post COVID scenario, when leisure tourists are permitted to travel, I believe, tourists themselves will prefer to travel to attractions and destinations with less people,” claimed the Regional Director.

“First group of international travellers, as we could see now, are those of essential travel, such as for business or medical treatment.”

Therefore, Sirisumpan personally anticipates to see the first movement of Bangladeshi travellers to Thailand will be medical tourists.

Joining during a challenging time

Sirisumpan took the role of Director at TAT in February this year during one of the most challenging times in history for travel trade as the coronavirus pandemic is continuing to leave tremendous impact on global travel and tourism industry.

Yet, he expressed great optimism, saying, “Even in a time of crisis, there is always an opportunity.”

Thailand COVID-19 state

Sirisumpan claimed the current COVID-19 situation in Thailand is in a stable stage as the government has successfully controlled the pandemic within the country.

“There is mostly only single digit or zero infected each day and all these new cases are the Thais returning from abroad. So, there is no domestic transmit of infection in the country during these past few months,” he said.

According to www.worldometers.info, as of August 8, Thailand has 3,348 infected cases with three new cases added. Among them, 3,150 have recovered and 58 have died.

The containment of the virus spread follows the successful cooperation of all in every sector of the country, including both public and private, and most importantly all Thais and foreigners who live in Thailand, said Sirisumpan.

“Because of this Thailand has been ranked number one in the world for its ongoing COVID-19 recovery effort, according to the Global COVID-19 Index (GCI) which was recently released.”

Domestic tourism

People in Thailand can now travel freely to any part of the country and most attractions. And hospitality businesses are also gradually opening up to welcome back domestic tourists, both Thais and the expatriates living in Thailand, added

Sirisumpan.

“Although, relaxed domestic tourism has resumed in the country, social distance as well as safety and hygiene measures are being taken strictly.”

Inbound tourism

However, Sirisumpan said that inbound leisure travel would take longer to resume as the country will gradually start reopening its borders for foreign tourists, which at this stage are only “essential travellers”.

As of now, 11 specific groups are currently allowed to enter Thailand with “Certificate of Entry” from a Thai Embassy or Consulate overseas. These groups include: Thai nationals, diplomats, non-Thai families of Thai nationals, non-Thai nationals with PR, students, medical travellers etc.

Resumption of flights

Domestic flights in Thailand have been reinstated from May 1 and the number of flights and frequency has gradually increased to match the demand of domestic travel, noted Sirisumpan.

“Still, all scheduled international flights entering Thailand are restricted and all need prior approvals, as it is necessary to impose measures to restrict the travel to Thailand in accordance with the screening capability of the competent officers or the communicable disease control officers in order to efficiently control and prevent the spread of the virus in the country.”

On the other hand, following the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand’s announcement, from July 1 onwards, the international flights carrying several groups of Thai and foreigners based on the 11 categories are allowed entry into the kingdom.

Post-COVID action plan

To overcome possibly the biggest crisis and progress thereby, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has set a reviving direction for the tourism industry, stated the TAT Director.

The plan includes:

Reboot: Prioritising stimulation of domestic travel, building consumer confidence, encouraging tourist to spend more while they are travelling in Thailand.

Rebuild: Supporting the private sector to prepare and adapt to the “new normal” and enhancing long-term competitiveness such as upskill and reskill travel among tourism personnel.

Rebrand: Maintaining “Amazing Thailand” brand loyalty among Thai and foreign visitors and building confidence for travelling to Thailand as the first-choice destination.

Rebound: Stimulating a revival of the international markets by maintaining rapport

with existing customers and promoting the potential segments in line with “new normal”.

Rebalance: Focusing on sustainability management framework and responsibility to society and environment.

Positioning Thailand as first choice destination

For the international market and for the South Asia region, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has been working to promote and maintain Thailand to be a preferred and “Top of Mind” destination, shared Sirisumpan.

“TAT has been continuously and consistently updating the situation in Thailand with our partners in the travel trade and directly to the consumer as well as conducting various online activities to get both travel trade partners and consumer to engage with us.”

E-training for travel agents in Bangladesh

Sirisumpan mentioned that previously they have done product presentations and updates with travel agents in Bangladesh once or twice a year and during this lockdown and travel restriction period, they have participated in webinars focused on medical tourism for the Bangladesh market.

“We plan to conduct some more online seminars to update our travel trade partners in Bangladesh twice or thrice this year which will focus on medical tourism and updates on tourism products and services in Thailand as well as the “new normal” practices on safety and hygiene to ensure confidence among travellers while travelling to Thailand,” said Sirisumpan.

For instance, Thailand has launched “Amazing Thailand Safety and Health Administration Certification” or SHA projects in cooperation with Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Ministry of Public Health and all Associations of travel and tourism in Thailand.

He further mentioned that the SHA projects aim to make tourism a part of the overall national preventive measures and ensure that both Thai and foreign tourists have a positive experience, and that they are happy and confident in the sanitation and safety of Thailand’s tourism products and services.

Govt stimulus package for tourism

Amid the current scenario, the Thai government and TAT are focusing on stimulus packages on domestic tourism as first priority as well as supporting the travel and tourism businesses in the country such as training and preparing for “new normal” travel trade in the post COVID-19 era, marked Sirisumpan.

“We are preparing for the new normal practices under the SHA projects to ensure safety of foreign inbound tourists when the country is ready to welcome them. All our TAT overseas offices are continuing to work with our travel trade partners in their respective markets to promote Thailand as a “Top of Mind” destination while considering the market sentiment,” the TAT Director concluded.

