

## **Bangladesh must be off red list for travel to rebound : Amari GM**

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : Even after the lifting of the last lockdown, there is still a hesitancy to travel in the market. Foreign travellers from European countries are reluctant to visit Bangladesh currently because they are apprehensive about their return as Bangladesh is in the 'red list'. For example, someone visiting the country from the UK would have to quarantine upon arrival, back to their country for 12-14 days, at a cost of USD 2.5 thousand. This is making the foreigners postpone travel to Bangladesh until the situation becomes better.

Christopher Baker, General Manager, Amari Dhaka said this while talking to The Bangladesh Monitor recently at his office at the hotel premise in the capital.

"We are getting plenty of inquiries and reservations even. However, until Bangladesh moves out of the red list, foreign travellers are hesitant to come fearing they might have to quarantine upon their return back to their countries at high expense," said Baker.

"But it is not that we are getting cancellations. The travellers are only postponing the dates. Meaning, they are just waiting for Bangladesh to move to the amber or green list," claimed Baker, adding, "This means the demand is there and travel will rebound."

However, the general manager, mentioned vaccination rollout across the country to

curb the spread of the coronavirus is key in this regard. He praised the government for its initiative of carrying out vaccinations rapidly which in turn is resulting in decreasing infection rates and increasing amount of immunity.

In terms of vaccination rates, Bangladesh is doing better than possibly any other country, said Baker. The country in most places have reached over 70 per cent immunity and even 90 per cent in certain zones, he mentioned.

Bangladesh must promote these developments globally in efforts to get out of the red list of other countries. Nevertheless, these commendable measures will soon take Bangladesh out of the red list and move it to amber and eventually green, hoped Baker, leading to the rebound of travel.

After the hotel reopened following the lifting of the last lockdown, business is gradually picking up, from single digit to double digits in occupancy. Currently, Amari Dhaka has 20 per cent occupancy with a good mix of guests. Most of them are foreigners working in different projects of the country, noted the general manager.

Domestic travel, on the other hand, has only begun. On weekends, the hotel welcomes many foreign officials working in projects at Chattogram and Cox's Bazar. Also, locals are opting for staycations at the hotel with great enthusiasm following months long cabin fever due to lockdowns, he added.

Amari's attractive staycation promotions are getting much response in this regard. Currently the hotel is offering staycation packages on weekdays from Sunday-Wednesday at Deluxe Room for two adults and two kids. With the room included, at BDT 6,999 net, guests can have a day-cation and use the pool, at BDT 7,999 net guests can enjoy set breakfast or breakfast in bed, at BDT 10,999 guests can avail set breakfast and set lunch, and at BDT 13,999 net guests can indulge in set breakfast, set lunch and set dinner.

Another staycation offer is available. The getaway package for single occupancy with pool and fitness centre facilities for three days is priced at BDT 7,499 net per room night with breakfast, and 50 per cent discount on F&B, for five days at BDT 6,999 net per room night with breakfast, 50 per cent discount on F&B, 2pc laundry per day, and for 14 days at BDT 6,499 net per room night with breakfast, 50 per cent discount on F&B, 4 pc laundry per day.

Moreover, F&B is also getting stronger by the day, mentioned Baker.

"We are trying to be more innovative with our F&B offerings to attract locals," said Baker. Hence, the hotel is offering attractive F&B promotions as well.

Delicious buffet dinner is available during weekdays at BDT 5,999 net. Buy One Get Three free is available. The hotel has also introduced Amari signature kebab carnival platter at BDT 2,275, Western Set at BDT 4,500 for two, Oriental Delights at BDT 3,300 and Royal Indian Safari at BDT 2,300 net.

A huge hit among guests is the hotel's Butchers Corner, said the general manager. Guests will be able to indulge in Indian, Japanese, Chinese and Thai delicacies during dinner buffet there at BDT 4,999 net. Buy One Get Two free is available for selected bank cards.

A new and innovative addition to the hotel's F&B initiatives is their picnic boxes. The hotel is offering picnic boxes named Charui Bhati as takeaways: regional vegetarian at BDT 1,299; regional non vegetarian at BDT 1,699; Thai at BDT 2,099; and Mediterranean at BDT 6,399.

Besides, several spa and fitness club promotions are available for guests at the hotel.

"We do everything with a purpose. We are now trying to understand what our audience wants and targeting to meet that," Baker noted.

It is to be mentioned here that Amari Dhaka is a government approved hotel for quarantine and with world class safety protocol - Onyx Clean - the hotel does not compromise with Covid-19 health safety standards.

Fortunately, even though it had suffered due to closure during the lockdowns, it never failed to pay its staff, said the General Manager.

For travel to rebound, the General Manager said, "The best thing right now would be more clarity for travellers. Many are getting confused by the constantly changing travel restrictions. Hence, these are effecting their confidence in travel. As soon as the situation globally and nationally becomes more stable, travel will definitely rebound," said Baker.

To further facilitate growth of the travel and hospitality industries currently, quick vaccination rollout across the country and tourism development initiatives are a must, concluded the General Manager of Amari Dhaka.