

Law for tour operators

A Monitor Report

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Dhaka : After decades of wait and absence of accountability, the government has finally recognised the business of tour operation and initiated steps to bring order and discipline in the flourishing tour operation business.

This long-awaited step of the government has received widespread acclaim and elite of the tour operation business, have expressed the hope, that the proposed law would bring discipline in the sector and help generate confidence among both foreign and domestic tourists.

It may be mentioned here that, with a view to bringing discipline in the business of tour operation in the country, the government has recently approved a draft law. Registration has been made compulsory for tour operators and guides under the provisions of the law.

Recently, the cabinet approved a draft law called Bangladesh tour operator and guide (Registration and operation) law 2020.

According to the Cabinet Secretary a Tourism Authority will be established to bring tour operators under registration. To expand tourism industry through earning of tourist's confidence, this law is being made, he said and added there will be provision of punishment for violation of the law.

All those who are now engaged in tour operation business will be brought under

registration under the law.

Tour Operators

It may be noted that, tour operator is an organisation, firm, or company who buys individual travel components, separately from their suppliers and combines them into a package tour, which is sold with their own price tag to the public directly or through middlemen.

More precise tour operators are primarily responsible for delivering and performing the services specified in a given package tour. They can provide these services themselves as some have their own cars and coaches, hotels, and other travel-related services or can obtain these from the other suppliers. That is why they are called manufacturers of tourism products.

Today, tour operators have become highly competitive. They endeavor to achieve a high volume of turnover, and maximum International and domestic market share by effectively operating. Moreover, the success of many developed and developing nations as tourists' destinations depend heavily on a tour operator's ability to attract tourists, development and promotion of tourism plant, diversification of tourism product and their social responsibilities to develop a remote and backward area.

Types of Tour Operators

Tour operators generally offer a variety of package tours to cater to the needs of different kinds of travellers.

Tour operators are basically categorised into four types. These are categories on the basis of their nature of the business and its operations. These are- (1) Inbound Tour Operators; (2) Outbound Tour Operators; (3) Domestic Tour Operators and (4) Ground Operators.

Importance of Tour Operators

Tours operators play a key role in the tourism sector. Tour operators create tourist products, promote them and finally sold them to tourists.

Tour operators provide the best and competitive price to the tourist. Tour operators negotiate with suppliers of tourism products such as hotels, airlines and provide the best possible price to the tourist. Tour operators buy tourist products in bulk and get huge discounts from suppliers. So that they provide tourist products at a cheap price.

Tour operators organised a tour in the best way. They personalise and make sure each and every component of the tour is well-taken care. Tour operators provide the best travel experience during a tour. Tour operators save tourists time and money.

Tour operators provide immediate support systems at the host country as well as a foreign land. When tourists travel to a foreign land and things get uncertain, maybe its a health or loss of documents and need to return back or change of travel plan. A qualified tour operator takes care of all these unseen events with efficiency.

Tour operator caters to the needs of tourists on the based on their taste of travel. Tour operator provides all the best available option according to tourist needs and demands

A tour operator has the responsibility to look after the finer details of a vacation or tour such as hotel, accommodation, meals, conveyance, etc.

Welcome Step, Positive Reactions

The effort of the government to formulate law in regard to tour operation business has been widely welcomed as it is going to remove existing great void in this business.

To get the opinion and reaction of the trade for which this law is being enacted, on behalf of The Bangladesh Monitor, Syed Ghulam Qadir, a prominent tour operator as well as Assistant Editor of the journal, contacted some prominent tour operators

of the country to get their reactions.

Moinuddin Helal

Moinuddin Helal of River and Green Tours as well as Editor of Bangla journal--Parjatan Bichitra, welcomed the government move and said through this tour operation business has received legal recognition. The law would increase organisational transparency and ensure accountability in the tourism business. The law will also help strengthen tourism industry structurally and generate confidence among tourists-both domestic and international.

Helal said in the coming post COVID period, the method of tourism operation is going to be different and the law will help going that. The tour operator's law would play important role in organisational programme, he added.

Helal said at present, anybody, any time and manner-like different social media-can start business of tour operation. This has resulted in un-professional and unskilled handling of tourists. The proposed law will be able to free the tourism business from existing indiscipline.

Helal said that the business of tour operation is a specialised one and as such highly dependent on skill-skill to provide attractive services to tourists of wide variety of groups.

Various organisations are now promoting destinations online and they are posing unwanted competition for traditional tour operators which are equipped with skilled manpower.

He said tour operators have responsibility to extend services to tourists as such should be professionally capable to provide required services.

Rezaul Ekram Razu

Rezaul Ekram Razu, President of Inbound Tour Operators Association described the government step to formulate law as wonderful and praiseworthy job.

He said, this far government was in no way involved in the business of tour operation. Tour Operators conducted business on the basis of only trade license.

In the absence of any law, foreign tour operators are conducting business without legal basis. There is no mechanism or rules and regulation to control this, Rezaul said. The proposed law would help curb this kind of practice of doing business without any control, he added.

Syed Mahbubul Islam

Syed Mahbubul Islam Bulu, President of Guide Association praised the step to formulate law and said the situation created by COVID-19 pandemic has put guides under enormous distress.

Mahbub recommended enrollment of guides without any kind of fee.

Masud Hussain

Masud Hussain of Bengal Tours as well as President of Inbound Tour Operators Network said that the demand for law for the tour operator was pending for about two and a half decades. There was no accountability in the sector. Those who are really involved with tourism industry, would be benefitted by the proposed law.

Masud said that the tour operators of the country wanted an umbrella law and suggested meeting with stake holders to determine detail provisions of the law.

About foreign tour operators doing business in the country, Masud said they may be allowed with local partners.

Taufiq Rahman

Taufiq Rahman of Journey Plus as well as Secretary General of PATA Bangladesh Chapter said there were laws for travel agent and hotels. But there was no law for business of tour operation-a comparatively new sector of country's tourism industry.

Taufiq warned that detail provisions of the law should be made to help flourish the business of tour operation in an orderly discipline manner, not to impose control. He described the step of the government as timely and expressed the hope that the proposed law would benefit the sector.

Rafeeuzzaman

President of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB) M Rafeeuzzaman welcomed the law and said this far tour operators were doing business only under trade licenses.

He suggested to made provisions of registration, as tour operator easy and for a period of five years-instead of three years, required by travel agents.

Rafeeuzzaman opposed the entry of foreign tour operators in the country and said they should not be permitted to do business. If foreign tour operators are allowed, interests of local tour operators will be harmed, he said.

The president of TOAB said that there are number of members of the association who are not engaged in business of tour operation. The proposed law when implemented would help eliminate non-active members, he said.