

DTM-'02 ends with call for marketing Bangladesh

'Discover own history, beauty and heritage'

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

Local tourists have started discovering the country's history, beauty and heritage rather travelling abroad and only they can enhance the country's image and promote its exotic spots abroad, participants of the Dhaka Travel Mart 2002 have said.

They also said a few years back the tendency of travelling within the country was rare, but now there are thousands of people eager to know the dozens of attractive spots in the country.

On the concluding day yesterday, the three-day fair witnessed highest number of visitors, the organisers and participants of the event said.

"The people of the country are now eager to discover the country's history, beauty and heritage which have long been remained undiscovered," said Mofazzal Hossain, author of a travel book on Bangladesh and a former General Manager of the state-run Parjaton Corporation.

He said one would be surprised to know that there was no Bangla book on travelling in Bangladesh before his publication.



A partial view of Bangkok Hospital stall at Dhaka Travel Mart-2002 at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

"How people could know about their motherland without having proper information on travelling," Hossain asked.

He said Bangladesh is a rich

country in terms of its scenic beauty, cultural heritage and history but awareness among the people should be created to foster the industry.

"People should know own country before going abroad. Essays on travel should be included in the textbook so that our learners feel interested in travelling their own

country," said another private tour operator.

Muhammad MA Laskar, Executive Director of private tour operator World Tourism Limited, was quite happy with the responses he received at the gala exhibition.

He said people of the country are still 'travel shy' due to lack of awareness and government initiative to popularise tourism in the country.

Laskar, however, mentioned that there is a new trend among people to travel across the country, who previously opted to go abroad for recreation.

He said once people were reluctant to visit tourist spots in the country, as they felt insecure. "But the scenario has been changed and people are now thinking to know their own country."

In contrast, Masud Hassan, Executive Director of The Bengal Tours, said his company so far distributed as many as 7,000 leaflets but failed to receive booking from any prospective traveller.

"We are not frustrated out of the fact but I believe that we would be able to create positive trend in favour of travelling in the country



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors at Tni Holidays stall at Dhaka Travel Mart-2002 at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

and popularise the new faculty of business," he said.

His firm offers visits to exotic locations of Sundarban by their own

ship-- MV Bhela.

Many local tour operators have come up at the exhibition with attractive tour packages inside the country. But most of the packages remain confined in Sundarban, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Kuakata and Sylhet.

Visitors at the exhibition were found eager to manage a tour package within their financial capacity. Many of them were found inquiring about suitable tour packages.

Famous Indian hotel chains such as Taj Bengal and Oberoi Grand participated in the event. People of Bangladesh can have booking done at Oberoi Grand Hotel from its office at Dhaka, an official of the hotel said.

"We have plan to offer special package for Bangladeshi travel loving people," said a representative of Taj Bengal Hotel, operating more than 70 hotels in different locations in India.

Different airlines, courier services and even a hospital of Thailand participated in the DTM.

Country needs to wipe out bad images to foster tourism

DTM seminar says

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh needs to wipe out its bad images in the world as a disaster and trouble-prone country to foster its tourism industry.

Successful governments portrayed the country as a flood and cyclone-hit nation to get assistance from foreign donors.

Speakers at a seminar titled 'Tourism in Bangladesh: its Prospects and Problems' made the observation yesterday. They also put emphasis on grooming trained and professional people for offering good services to the tourists for the development of the sector.

Political unrest and bomb blasts in meetings and gatherings also tarnished the country's image to a great extent, keeping tourists at bay, they added.

Organised by Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (TOAB) on the occasion of the Dhaka Travel



PHOTO: STAR

Visitors make enquires at a stall at Dhaka Travel Mart-2002 at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

Mart-2002, the seminar was addressed, among others, by Abdur Razzak, Chairman of Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation (BPC), Abdul Mannan MP, Chairman of Pacific Travel Association (PATA)-Bangladesh, Kazi Wahidul Alam, Chairman of DTM-2002 Organising Committee, Faridul Haq, President TOAB, Dr Afzal Hossain, a teacher of Marketing Department of Dhaka University, and Hasan Monsur, advisor of TOAB.

They said there should be political commitment to remove the negative image and public-private joint effort to promote tourism in the country.

Foreigners will not buy risk and harassment in holiday-making, they said and added that the country needs to offer something new to the tourists and for that marketing of products and destinations is very important.

BPC Chairman said Parjaton Corporation is failing in its effort to



PHOTO: STAR

A partial view of Emirates stall at Dhaka Travel Mart-2002 at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

boost tourism industry due to its dual operation. "Although the corporation was established to promote tourism it had to start commercial operation to live on its own earnings as directed by successive governments," he said.

Abdul Mannan MP said the authority failed to chart map of

tourist destinations of the country, which is a pre-requisite for attracting tourists.

The perception still exists in the country that the hotels and guest-houses are places of sexual activities, gambling and drinking, hindering growth of the industry, he said.

Abdul Mannan, who is a former

tourism and civil aviation minister, said he in his tenure failed to develop tourism industry mainly for scarcity of fund as government deems the industry luxury and it was not included in priority list.

He suggested the BPC should be confined only to promotional activities so that it can project the country properly in the world.

Dr Afzal Hossain said if one-third of India's GDP and 79 per cent of Singapore's come from tourism why Bangladesh lags behind, though it has lots to offer the tourists.

"Stringent visa issuing system and harassment of foreign travelers must go to draw tourists," he said.

"Though the National Tourism Council which is headed by Prime Minister was established in 1992, it met only once since its inception, bearing testimony to government's indifference in the sector".

BB welcomes Rupali Bank's move to shut down 60 branches

Central bank wants NCBs to merge loss-making branches

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank has initiated a work plan to encourage the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) to merge their losing branches to reduce overhead costs.

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, governor of the central bank, divulged the plan here yesterday at a conference of Rupali Bank, the smallest of the four NCBs.

He advised the management of the four NCBs to identify their losing

branches and sit together to work out merger plans of those branches of the same area.

The governor welcomed the recommendation of the Rupali Bank Board of Directors for shutting down 60 of its 147 loss-making branches and hoped the bank management would help implement the "bold" step.

Rupali Bank has 514 branches -- one overseas branch in Karachi and 275 urban and 238 rural branches across the country.

"How a bank can run profitably with 28 per cent of the branches making losses?" Dr Ahmed posed a question to the conscience of the bank management.

Chairman of Rupali Bank Board of Directors Dr Mamtazuddin Ahmed presided over the conference of the bank's zonal and corporate heads at a local hotel, where Managing Director Yeasin Ali explained the bank's present status and future plans.

The fact sheet shows 147 out of

the bank's 514 branches making losses with a burden of Tk 1343.76 crore classified loans that accounts for 35 per cent of the bank's total loan portfolio.

However, the bank recorded an operating profit of Tk 28.70 crore during the last calendar year 2001.

The financial status of the bank angered Hafiz Ibrahim MP, one of its directors, who harshly criticised the bank staff for their failure in improving the health of the bank.

Janata Bank's special loan scheme for service holder

Janata Bank has introduced a short term credit programme for the service holders, says a press release.

The loan will be provided for medical treatment, marriage, travel, maternity and other requirements.

Employees of govt, semi-govt and autonomous institutions, renowned NGO's, universities, medical colleges and other employees of private institutions acceptable to the bank may avail of the credit facility.

The amount of loan will be an equivalent to 3 three months basic salary repayable by 12 monthly equal installments.

District level grade one branches & corporate branches have been advised to arrange the disbursement of the loan accordingly.

Citibank NA Bangladesh introduces new logo

Citibank NA Bangladesh has introduced a new logo as part of its global rollout, says a press release.

The signature blue wave remains, but the compass rose introduced in 1976 has been replaced with a red arc to reflect the broader range of financial services that Citibank now offers individuals and companies as a Citigroup brand.

The change also marks Citibank's hundred years' presence in South and East Asian countries i.e. China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, the Philippines and Singapore.

Jean-Paul Votron, Group Executive of Citibank NA, Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East, Africa and Indian Subcontinent, said at a press conference in Mumbai, "The new logo reflects what Citibank and Citigroup are evolving into a complete financial services company for any individual or corporate, offering its customers more than ever before."

David E Rees, Chief Executive

Officer of Citibank NA Bangladesh, says, "Our local strategy is driven by a locally embedded customer-driven approach and focuses on service, technology, innovation and relationships. The timing of the new brand matches our initiative to service a much wider range of customers with world class service."

NBR restricts fish imports thru' land ports

UNB, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue has restricted the import of fish and dry fishes through land ports with effect from Saturday.

Circulars have already been sent to all the land customs stations, NBR officials said.

Fish and fish-product imports are, however, allowed through Teknaf and customs houses of Dhaka and Chittagong.

Khashru pledges all-out support for women entrepreneurs

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday assured women entrepreneurs of all government supports, including training and capital, for improving their productive ventures.

"Women will have to be involved more in trade and commerce to accelerate the country's socio-economic development," he told a 17-member delegation from Bangladesh Women Entrepreneurs Association (BWEA) as they called on the minister at his office.

Association President Nasreen Awal Mintoo led the delegation to apprise the minister of various problems facing the women entrepreneurs and sought cooperation of the government.

"The government will provide all possible support so that they can contribute significantly to trade and commerce," he said.

IT'S BUSINESS.....

The best companies to work for

MAMUN RASHID

Those who have read the latest issue of business magazine 'Fortune' would be getting a similarity with the title of the article. The difference is that instead of the US giants, this write-up looks more at the local corporations. After almost 30 years of the country's independence and with the second generation gradually entering the business world to take over, it is worth looking at Bangladesh's local corporate houses--is there a local brand in the offing? Is there any organisation people would be happy to join and stick to for a longstanding relationship or career?

When we talk to the graduating students of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at Dhaka University, North South University or from any other university at job fairs or interviews, they all express their intention to join only the multinational corporations (MNCs). Given a further choice they would prefer to join only a few of those MNCs. I asked a number of students from IBA and my colleagues in the financial as well as manufacturing sectors and came out with

issues like-'future', 'career progression potentials', 'self esteem', 'growth opportunity', 'empowerment', 'work environment', and of course, 'compensation package'. Few of the brilliant ones also focused on 'similar line of thinking' and 'sharing the same vision', while talking of a dream organisation.

Are those totally absent on our national front?--of course not. When this writer did a small survey in identifying few local brands on the basis of the above issues, the list was quite encouraging. I know of a local financial institution where a CEO of a large European bank had to personally request the company not to take any more people as well as clients from that bank. The managing director of a private bank had to request the central bank to intervene, when most of its high potential officials were joining a fourth generation new bank. Not necessarily the most respected business house even in Bangladesh, is the highest pay master. The same study identified a small cap manufacturer in the export sector, where employees consider their work place better than their homes, a pharmaceutical

company where the executives play higher roles than the owners and a media company--which is run more like a corporate business house than a traditional newspaper.

Everywhere in the above companies, the employees found the organisations deeply involved in shaping their future, creating space for them at every stage and more to say 'committed to their individual success'. Believe me--none of the CEOs of these organisations or owners came from Harvard, Wharton, LBS or Oxford. Mere survival or awareness about the future, pushed them to commit increasingly to their people and organisational re-engineering. On the other hand, this writer also knows of few multinationals, where the CEOs feel like paying the employees from their wallets or treat people 'in the style of East India Company' as they pay staff little higher than the market average.

What helps people stick to the organisation and remain committed to its success, has been well answered by Jim Freer, vice chairman of Ernst and Young, "...to come up with creative ways to keep

employees satisfied and to treat them with respect and dignity".

Though job is a very precious thing in an over populated Bangladesh, there is also a growing class, who lays a strong emphasis on 'work environment', 'seniors having time for juniors to share the organisational vision' and 'allowing them to apply their own acumen for the progress of the company'. In a country like Bangladesh where 'acute intelligence deficiency syndrome' is spreading faster than 'acute immune deficiency syndrome' we need to focus more on individual capacity building in the organisations through further commitment to people and putting the right people into the right jobs. It is again all about allowing people to share the same vision as well as torments. Best friends are still the people who fought in the same war staying in the same bunker or trench and fighting the same enemies. There are companies in the world that had to cut pay during recession, lay off people and still have workers to love the company, for the reasons mentioned above, from which we can learn a lot.