

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 than 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.



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

country," said another private tour operator.

Muhammad M A 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

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



PHOTO: STAR
Visitors at TNI Holidays stall at Dhaka Travel Mart-2002 at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

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

ship-- MV Bheila.

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.

Successive 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.

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 travellers 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".

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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.

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

Central bank wants NCBs to merge loss-making branches

UNB, Dhaka

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. The fact sheet shows 147 out of

"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 Mamta Zuddin Ahmed presided over the conference of the bank's zonal and corporate heads at a local hotel, where Managing Director Yesin Ali explained the bank's present status and future plans.

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.

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.

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