

Parjatan Corporation takes campaigns to boost tourism

Govt declares 2016 as a 'visit Bangladesh year'

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THE volume of global footfall is increasing every year. But the share of this volume varies much from country to country. It depends on how a country can cash in on its own attractions in the competitive market. Tourist recipient countries usually undertake various campaign programmes. They offer new products and services, open new destinations, declare "visit country" years and so on.

Bangladesh also puts in efforts to attract foreign tourists in higher numbers. The present government is paying much importance to tourism. As part of various initiatives for the development of the tourism industry, the prime minister declared 2016 as a Visit Bangladesh Year or we can call it the tourism year.

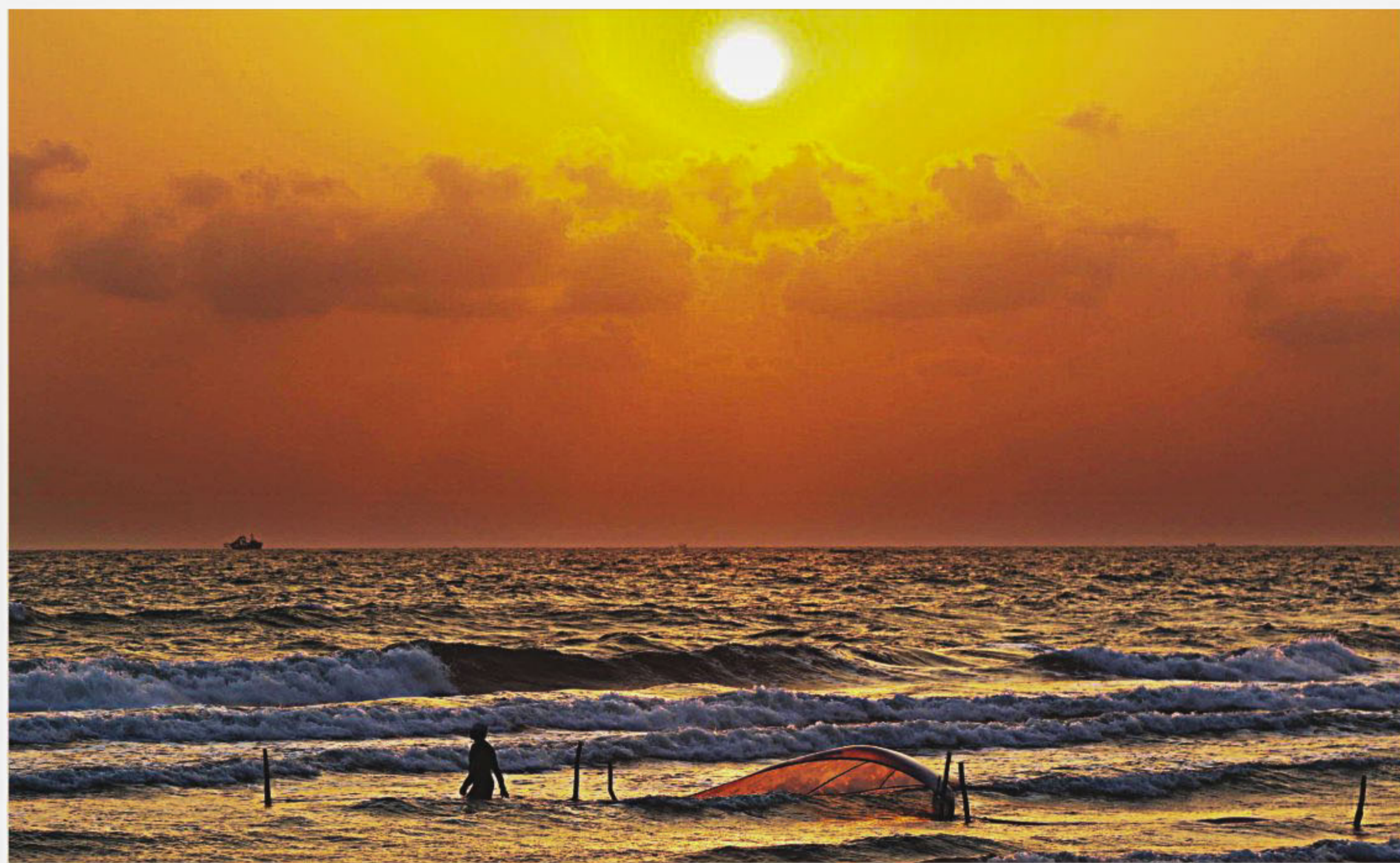
The Visit Bangladesh Year will be observed throughout the next three years, until 2018. The main objectives of this declaration are to brighten the image of Bangladesh abroad, and attract foreign tourists and foreign investment. The target is to attract at least one million tourists to Bangladesh in 2016.

To achieve the target, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has taken various programmes. The corporation has prepared a yearlong calendar, which is full of events to be observed almost every week.

A logo with a tagline has already been unveiled to mark the year. The logo represents the two icons of Bangladesh -- the smiling and ferocious face of the Royal Bengal Tiger and the beautiful Jamdani sari. The tagline reads 'Life Happens Here'.

Tourists find the happiest and most hospitable people in the world when they visit the country. People offer hospitality to tourists with smiling faces irrespective of creed, caste, race and sex. People of this country are resilient. They smile even under stress and despite natural disasters.

Bangladesh is also rich in culture, traditions and heritage, where foreign tourists find their souls. It is widely known that



A view of Cox's Bazar beach, a popular tourist destination.

STAR/FILE

Bangladesh is a country of diverse attractions and bountiful nature. History reveals that Bangladesh has been the cradle of civilisation, a centre of cultural diffusion.

The cultural history of Bangladesh is one of its greatest heritages, which every Bangladeshi is proud of. Each phase of the history of Bangladesh has its distinct characteristics and every race of people who came and settled here left their individual racial, religious or cultural impacts in the form of

temples, stupas, monasteries, mosques and spirituality.

Bangladesh is a multi-faceted cultural collage. Its deep-rooted heritage is amply reflected in its architecture, literature, dance, drama, music and paintings. Influenced by religions -- Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity -- Bangladesh has been a melting pot of diverse races and confluence of civilisations.

Sculpture, tapestry, engravings are developing along the main stream contemporary art

and drama, which have distinct features of intangible heritage in Bangladesh.

Fairs and festivals, both religious and social, always play a significant role in the lives of the people of Bangladesh that attract many tourists here from far and wide.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has already observed many programmes, like raising awareness among the locals about tourism and hygienic food preparation, marketing, surfing programmes in Cox's Bazar,

food festivals, kite festivals, cultural programmes, and folk music soiree. It has also organised seminars, introduced privilege cards, discounted offers at hotels and motels, and participated in different fairs at home and abroad.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation will host as many as 200 events throughout the next three years as part of the Visit Bangladesh Campaign.

The government has also taken initiatives to engage the youth in tourism. Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and Parjatan Bichitra (a travel magazine) have already organised a three-day youth festival in Dhaka. Thousands of people thronged the fair and demonstrated different types of adventure tourism gears.

Parjatan Bichitra also organised Asian Tourism Fair, which was participated by Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation and the civil aviation and tourism ministry.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has produced a romantic travel movie named 'Life in Rainbow', which represents the beautiful, adventurous tourist attractions that are visited by a foreign couple.

On the other hand, Bangladesh Tourism Board is carrying out promotions and publicity abroad.

The objective of the Visit Bangladesh Campaign is not only to enhance foreign tourist numbers but also increase the tally of domestic tourists. We expect that new jobs will be created and new tourism ventures will pop up. The involvement of women will increase manifold.

The Bangladesh missions abroad will also undertake different programmes to observe Bangladesh Tourism Year. Thus, Bangladesh will definitely be able to attract more tourists.

If foreign tourists visit during the ongoing campaign, they will be benefitted. So, we heartily welcome all the foreign tourists to visit Bangladesh and find their souls here.

The writer is the head of PR, Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation.

India cuts import taxes on wheat, palm oil, refined oils

REUTERS

INDIA has cut import taxes on wheat, crude palm oil and refined vegetable oils, a finance ministry order showed on Friday, as part of efforts to curb food inflation.

New Delhi lowered the wheat import tax to 10 percent from 25 percent and cut the import duty on both crude palm oil and refined edible oils by five percentage points to 7.5 and 15 percent respectively, the order on a government website, showed.

Wheat output in India, the world's second-biggest producer, has fallen well below the peak of 2014/15, reducing stocks to the lowest level in nearly a decade and pushing domestic prices close to record highs.

Private trade in India has already imported about 600,000 tonnes of wheat in 2016, the most in nine years.

Traders had expected the government to reduce or even abolish the 25 percent import tariff to make imports cheaper and ease a domestic supply squeeze.

"It's a good sign. Lower import tax will step up the availability of wheat in the local market," said Veena Sharma, secretary of the Roller Flour Millers Federation of India, the country's main wheat industry body.

Vegetable oil industry officials in India, the world's biggest edible oil importer, were disappointed about the cut in taxes on the import of crude palm oil and refined edible oils.

"This is not the right time to cut the import



Labourers unload sacks filled with wheat from a truck at a wholesale grain market in Punjab.

REUTERS/FILE

duty. We're a bit disappointed as we're on the verge of harvesting a new oilseed crop. The reduction in the duty will put pressure on local oilseed prices," Atul Chaturvedi, president of industry body Solvent Extractors Association of India, told Reuters.

Local vegetable oil prices have surged a fifth in the past three months.

"The government should have rather raised the differential between the duties of crude and refined oils to support the domestic refining industry," Chaturvedi said.

Twitter initiates talks with tech companies over sale

REUTERS

TWITTER Inc has initiated talks with several technology companies to explore selling itself, a person familiar with the matter said on Friday, signaling the start of what is likely to be a slow-rolling auction of the high-profile but money-losing social media company.

A sale of Twitter has been the subject of on-again, off-again rumors for many months as the company grapples with stagnant user growth, soft advertising sales and losses running at hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

The company's business struggles have come even as the 10-year-old service has evolved into a potent global source of news, entertainment and social commentary.

CNBC, citing anonymous sources, reported on Friday that Twitter is in talks with companies including Google and may receive a formal bid soon. A source told Reuters that Salesforce.com is also in pursuit.

Twitter and Alphabet Inc, Google's parent company did not respond to a request for comment.

Salesforce declined to comment. Verizon, another company mentioned in media reports on Friday as a possible suitor, said it did not comment on M&A rumors but that it had not submitted a bid for the company.

Twitter shares jumped more than 19 percent to \$22.22 per share on Friday, marking the largest one-day rise since their first day of trading in 2013. The company now

has a market value of around \$16 billion.

Morningstar analyst Ali Mogharabi said Alphabet would be the best acquirer for Twitter since it has not yet been able to crack social media on its own despite several efforts.

"From a strategic standpoint, we think it would be more beneficial for Alphabet as opposed to Salesforce," Mogharabi said. Former Google executive Omid Kordestani is executive chairman of Twitter.

Morningstar estimates Twitter could be bought for \$22 per share. Twitter is working with investment banks Goldman Sachs and Allen & Co in considering possible transactions, sources familiar with the situation said.

The most unexpected development on Friday was Salesforce.com's interest in acquiring Twitter. Salesforce serves business customers with cloud-based computing services and has virtually no presence in consumer media.

But a recent presentation about its new "Einstein" artificial intelligence platform provided a peek at how Twitter could fit into the company's strategy.

Salesforce executives said they license the Twitter "firehose" of all Tweets that come through the platform, and use it to power sentiment analysis and other tools that show how companies and brands are being discussed and perceived.

Salesforce Chief Executive Marc Benioff is active in political causes in San Francisco and the two companies are located just blocks from each other in the city.

Marriott's Starwood purchase makes largest hotel chain

AFP, New York

THE US hotels giant Marriott International on Friday announced it had completed its takeover of Starwood Hotels & Resorts, creating the world's largest hotel company. Shareholders in both companies had voted in April to approve the takeover after the Chinese insurer Anbang abandoned efforts to acquire Starwood.

"The new company will operate or franchise more than 5,700 properties and 1.1 million rooms, representing 30 leading brands from the moderate-tier to luxury in over 110 countries," Marriott said in a statement.

The new puts it well ahead of competitors Hilton Worldwide and InterContinental Hotels Group. The merger with Marriott will also let Starwood remain under US management and group its brands with those of Marriott, such as Ritz-Carlton, Gaylord Hotels and JW Marriott.

Huawei to start smartphone production in India in Oct

REUTERS, Mumbai/Beijing

CHINESE telecoms giant Huawei Technologies Co Ltd will start making smartphones in India next month, the company said on Friday, joining a wave of compatriots setting up plants in the world's third-biggest mobile market.

The plant will be operated with the Indian arm of electronics manufacturer Flextronics International Ltd in the southern Indian city of Chennai, Huawei said.

India is trying to attract manufacturing into the country as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" initiative. Huawei got the green light from the

government in July to set up the manufacturing plant in India, 19 months after applying for a license.

"We are convinced about the growth potential and future of India and we'll keep looking for opportunities to increase our presence here," Jay Chen, CEO, Huawei India said in a statement.

India is the world's fastest growing smartphone market and an attractive country for phone makers given growth in China is stagnating.

The number of smartphone users in India is expected to reach 990 million by 2020 from 798.4 million in 2015, according to a study by Cisco.

But so far a lack of good suppliers and

infrastructure have hampered efforts to manufacture phones in the country, forcing most of India's more than 100 different phone companies to import from China and Taiwan, though the Modi government is making efforts to make it easier for manufacturers.

"The vendor ecosystem in India is not as strong as it is in China. A lot of things still need to be imported from China when it comes to things like electronic components, batteries, display or others, but I am sure as the market progresses, we will start to see true manufacturing happening here in India," said Anshul Gupta, research director at Gartner.

The devices made by Huawei in India

are likely to hit the Indian market as early as October, the statement said, with the company looking to manufacture 3 million units by the end of 2017.

The company will also strengthen its after-sales services in India with over 200 service centres, including more than 30 exclusive Huawei service centres in the country. Huawei will also expand its Indian retail network, increasing to more than 50,000 the number of outlets it partners with by the end of the year.

Other manufacturers from China are also setting up in India. In 2015 China's Xiaomi Inc joined forces with Taiwan-based electronics contract manufacturer Foxconn to assemble phones in India.