

Cinnamon Grand launches B2b - a first in Sri Lanka recycling initiative

- **Co-Laureate 2007 Nobel Prize for Peace Prof Mohan Munasinghe congratulates Cinnamon Grand**
- **Proceeds towards charity**
- **Sustainable income generation for the community envisaged**
- **Sale of bags to the public on March 28th**

Being the first city hotel in Sri Lanka to be awarded all three ISO environmental certifications, i.e. ISO 14001, 22000 and 18001, Cinnamon Grand takes the commitment to environmental conservation and preservation further with the launch of a 'first in Sri Lanka' recycling initiative. B2b (Banners to Bags) is a unique project that is based on recycling flexi banners used for promotional material on billboards into durable bags that have multi-dimensional uses. Being acutely conscious of the responsibility the hotel has in being a model corporate citizen, B2b, cemented on the foundation of 'Recycling towards a better tomorrow', truly emphasizes the importance of infusing the triple bottom line philosophy into the hotel's daily operations.

Co-Laureate, 2007 Nobel Prize for Peace Professor Mohan Munasinghe who also chairs the Munasinghe Institute for Development (MIND), Colombo and is Director-General of the Sustainable Consumption Institute, Manchester University UK who was present at the launch congratulated Cinnamon Grand for the B2b initiative, which he said, "is a prime example of business innovation applied to promote sustainable development. They have taken the lead in a first of its kind recycling project in Sri Lanka. Flexi banners are used widely the world over but are not bio-degradable and never disposed of properly, making it a significant environmental hazard. Converting banners to bags clearly meets the requirements of the sustainable development triangle – economic, social and environmental. First, it takes a waste product and adds value to produce an economic good. Second, it is socially beneficial, providing sustainable livelihoods for unemployed and poor people. Third, it reduces the environmental burden of waste disposal through recycling."

Using the 3R initiative of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle as an inspiration, Cinnamon Grand worked on reducing waste that could arise from discarding the banners and reusing this discarded product by recycling it for better more productive use, while also ensuring that the proceeds of the bags are directly channeled to the hotel's primary charity initiative, the Children's Ward at the Cancer Hospital at Maharagama. Professor Munasinghe added: "I am very happy that the Cinnamon Grand has launched this fine scheme to make development more sustainable in Sri Lanka. B2b is a novel concept and I hope the Sri Lankan public will realize its importance and give the project ample support. We need this kind of commitment and partnership between business and civil society to ensure the sustainability of the nation and the planet."

Adding to Professor Munasinghe's thoughts, Deputy Chairman of John Keells Holdings, Ajit Goonewardene believes that Cinnamon Grand's innovative contribution to environmental sustainability encompasses the entire ethos of Cinnamon Grand, which is to think innovatively in working with and contributing towards the community and environment, while producing best in class products and service. "Each one of us can contribute towards the preservation of the environment in a small but innovative way and each small step is the start of any journey where great things can happen. Cinnamon Grand has begun that journey."

Explaining the genesis of the project, General Manager Rohan Karr stated, "Ever since we began using the banners two years ago, we didn't throw them away but instead stored them safely until we came up with an environmentally friendly plan. Discarding these flexi-banners without a sustainable recycling plan was simply not an option." Elaborating further on this 'First in Sri Lanka' recycling initiative which he hoped will spur others who use such non-biodegradable materials to be innovative in their environmentally sustainable plans, Karr says the transformation of the banners into bags is indeed amazing, as it encompasses all three sustainability reporting tenets. "The banners which have impacted the economic performance of our hotel, then continues to give a two fold use in both the environmental and social impact facets. Environmentally, we are using the 3R initiative to make use of our discarded flexi-banners and socially, we will use the proceeds to improve the facilities at the children's cancer ward in Maharagama. In our second phase, we take the principle of sustainable development further by engaging retired tailors in the production of bags to instigate employment avenues and additional income, which will permeate to sustainably developing the community."

The bags, designed exclusively by Cinnamon Grand are strong, durable, 100% waterproof and ideal for the modern day individual, as their fashionable trendy features make them a 'must have' accessory. Due to the bags also being made from different banners, no two bags will ever be alike and hence, each bag will be unique and one of a kind. Cinnamon Grand abhorred the much practiced option of discarding these flexi-banners in landfills or burning them. "The CO2 released into the atmosphere as a result of incinerating is similar to plastic and extremely harmful," explains Karr. "Also, can you imagine the degradation of the land if we simply dump these into a landfill? We were not prepared to do that. So instead, we pursued a recycling option and B2b is what we came up with. We are conscious of being accountable for our actions and the impact that our actions have on the larger stakeholder segments and therefore, while we have the environmental certifications, it is also important that we look for ways and means of being environmentally conscious and being innovative in those areas as well."

According to PR Manager Tharika Goonathilake, "Recycling flex is an ecologically sound practice which is now permeating around the world. It is imperative that we, as a responsible corporate citizen, take the lead in ensuring that sound environmentally friendly practices are initiated and practiced because after all, we are only trustees of the earth for future generations. It is our responsibility therefore to do what's right for the planet." She elaborates that the B2b bag is not simply a bag. "It's fashionable, hip and trendy. There's lots of thought gone into it and the design is such that it takes the elements of the banner into consideration before the bag is finally cut and sewn. But before that the banners are washed and treated and the painted area always remains on the outside. The owner of the bag will always feel that they are doing something worthwhile and contributing towards the preservation of the environment. "

Retailing from Rs 250 to Rs 500 and proceeds going towards its charity, Cinnamon Grand will add impetus to the B2b project on World Environment Day launching a series of events that will continue the momentum of environmental awareness.





