

China eyes to grab medical traveler segment as India limits entry

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Dhaka: The number of medical visas issued to Bangladeshis by India has dropped significantly, paving the way to a promising opportunity for China to capture the market as it aggressively promotes medical tourism in Bangladesh.

According to reports citing officials, the drop in visa issuance is caused by strained bilateral relations following the ousting of the former government in Bangladesh and a shortage of personnel.

In 2023, India issued over two million medical visas to Bangladeshis, marking healthcare as one of the primary reasons for travel between the two neighboring nations.

Bangladeshis preferred to visit India for medical purposes due to less travel cost, affordable healthcare, and the presence of Bangla-speaking

medical staff at the neighboring nation's hospitals.

Previously, India issued between 5,000 to 7,000 medical visas per day, however, since August, following the ousting of the former government in Bangladesh, that number has now dropped to fewer than 1,000 per day.

China has swiftly capitalized on this gap by promoting its healthcare sector as an ideal alternative. Recently, several Bangladeshis travelled to China's Yunnan province for medical treatment, said Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen, adding, these visits mark the beginning of medical tourism cooperation between the two nations.

It may be mentioned here, China is not only strengthening medical ties but also increasing economic investments in Bangladesh.

Wen noted that since the interim government assumed office, at least 14 Chinese companies have invested USD 230 million in the country.

As a result, over the past seven months, China has come up as the largest foreign investor in Bangladesh.

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