

## India witnesses 90pc drop in Bangladeshi visitor arrivals

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Dhaka: India is reportedly witnessing a staggering 90 per cent drop in Bangladeshi visitor arrivals currently, following the latter's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and departure in response to a mass uprising on August 5.

The unrest in Bangladesh led to temporary flight disruptions and a suspension of all visas except medical. Although flights resumed later, the passenger load factor from Bangladesh to India has decreased by 50 per cent, said reports.

Reports cited representatives of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh saying, the country's outbound travel market is largely occupied by travel to India.

"India is a key destination for Bangladeshi travellers, accounting for

40-45 per cent of outbound trips. The majority visits are for medical treatment (over 80pc) while shopping (15pc) and leisure (5pc) are secondary purposes of visits,” said reports citing TOAB representatives.

It may be mentioned here that tourist arrivals in India surged by 43.5 per cent in 2023, yet still 15.5 per cent below pre-pandemic levels. The neighbouring country saw 9.23 million visitors in 2023, bringing in RS 24,707 crore in foreign exchange. However, Bangladesh occupied over 22.5 per cent of these tourists, representing the largest percentage from any single nationality, added reports.

Reports also cited representatives of Indian Association of Tour Operators West Bengal Chapter saying, following the recent mass uprising and ousting of the Sheikh Hasina government, “India has stopped issuing visas. Only those with genuine medical reasons are currently granted visas. Therefore, travel operators, hotels and guest houses near hospitals in West Bengal have experienced a near 90 per cent drop in business.”

In 2023, medical tourism from Bangladesh to India experienced a significant increase of 48 per cent, with the number of patients rising to 449,570 from 2022’s 304,067, further informed reports.

Reports also cited representatives of a Kolkata-based medical tourism company saying, his company earlier managed around 150 Bangladeshi patients each month. However, currently, his company is observing a huge decline as the number of patients has fallen to only 5-6 a month while many appointments have been cancelled, concluded reports.

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