

## Japan takes action on overtourism

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Dhaka: Japan is planning to tighten tourism regulations in response to growing concerns over overtourism, following a sharp increase in international arrivals in early 2025.

The number of foreign visitors from January to April rose 24.5pc compared to the same period last year.

On May 21, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party launched a panel aimed at addressing rising public unease over the growing presence of foreign tourists.

Government sources said on June 4 that authorities are also expected to introduce stricter rules targeting unpaid medical bills incurred by foreign tourists during their stay.

The measure will likely be included in the government's annual basic policy on economic and fiscal management, which is set to be approved

by the Cabinet later this year.

The policy is expected to explicitly state that the government will “reassess insurance coverage for foreign nationals,” according to the sources.

Additionally, the government is weighing the possibility of requiring foreign visitors to have private health insurance. This move comes after a nationwide survey by the ministry, which unveiled that 11,372 foreign visitors received medical treatment in Japan in September 2024.

Among them, 0.8pc did not pay, resulting in roughly 62.35 million yen (approximately €375,978.51).

At the same time, foreign nationals who are registered residents or have been in Japan for more than three months are typically required to join the National Health Insurance system unless they are already covered by another public health insurance plan.

Lawmakers are also considering changes to the tax-free shopping system for foreign tourists, underscoring the need for tighter regulation or even full removal of the scheme.

The program was introduced decades ago to increase spending by foreign travellers, allowing them to buy products without paying the country’s 10% consumption levy, if the items are taken abroad.

In reality, this program has been misused for resale and tax evasion. To cut down abuse, officials are changing the policy for foreign tourists as of November 2026.

Under the new system, visitors will pay the full 10pc tax at the time of purchase and then seek a refund at the airport after declaring their goods. This approach is like practices in France and Italy.

Earlier in 2025, Japan introduced an entry fee for Mount Fuji to curb overtourism. Furthermore, in March, a shrine in Tsushima City, Nagasaki closed its doors to visitors because of tourists’ bad behaviour.

This decision was a direct response to disrespectful actions and a lack of adherence to local customs. These actions show Japan’s consistent effort to handle the issue of overtourism and to preserve tradition.

