

Sri Lanka shuts down int'l airports till May end

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Dhaka: All international airports in Sri Lanka are shut down till May 31 in efforts to curb the resurgence of Covid-19 infections.

The decision by the director general of civil aviation on May 19 affects both Sri Lankan residents and foreign tourists and joins an island-wide lockdown order passed earlier this week that applies from this weekend and into next week.

The new restrictions will impact Wesak on May 26 and 27, a festival that marks the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha, the spiritual leader of Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community.

Sri Lanka has seen a recent spike in cases, with daily caseloads of over 1,500 and deaths topping 1,000 on May 18. The total number of cases as of May 18 was 147,720.

The border restriction will not apply to departing passengers, emergency aircraft, freight operations, and humanitarian flights, as well as passengers transiting through Colombo to another destination.

The move is regarded as a further strike to Sri Lanka's tourism industry, which has been seeing only a trickle of international arrivals despite reopening its borders on January 21,

2021.

Despite the ongoing crisis, tourism authorities are continuing their marketing efforts. One of their most prominent efforts is fielding Sri Lankan Tourism chairperson Kimarli Fernando in numerous interviews on international channels to promote the country's tourism draws.