

India to start 'air bubble' with Nepal

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Dhaka: In a fillip to people ties that will allow the resumption of business, medical, and FIT travel, the Indian government has decided to start an “air bubble” with Nepal. The Indian foreign ministry, according to December 10 reports, has agreed to a proposal from Nepal to restart flight operations between the two countries in a phased manner to ensure people of the two countries are not inconvenienced due to covid-19 related embargo.

This is seen as one of the outcomes of Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla’s visit to Nepal last month to reset ties after a bitter row over a Nepalese map that had shown Indian territories lying within Nepal’s boundaries.

Under the plan to operate the “air bubble,” there will be two flights a day, one from each side, between Kathmandu and New Delhi initially, one each by Nepal Airlines and Air India.

Flights coming into India can bring in Indian and Nepalese nationals, overseas citizens of India (OCI) cardholders, and Person of Indian Origin cardholders holding passports of any country. Third-country nationals including diplomats intending to travel to India for any purpose and their dependents will also be allowed under certain conditions.

Flights from India can ferry Indian and Nepalese nationals to Kathmandu.

All flights operated under the “air bubble” will adhere to the strict norms issued for the covid-19 pandemic. Travelers to Nepal will have to fill up a form and carry a negative covid-19 test that is issued not more than 72 hours before landing in Kathmandu, said the provisions.

It is learned that the air transport bubble will be effective immediately and will remain valid till the resumption of scheduled services between the two countries. Tickets for the flights can be sold through the airlines' websites or sales agents.