

Saudia fails to help migrants with hotel bookings, 1000 expats miss flights

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Dhaka: Troubles for Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant workers related to hotel booking for institutional quarantine reached their greatest heights when Saudi Arabian Airlines announced that they would not be able to facilitate migrant workers from now on with hotel bookings at the airline's office.

As a result, about 1,000 Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrants missed their flights in two days since May 26 following the failure of booking hotels for quarantine stay in the Middle Eastern country.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines which will resume its flight to Saudi Arabia from May 29 after nine days suspension in its directives also said it is the migrant workers who will have to complete the procedure of hotel booking through specific websites.

Many migrant workers had been wandering helplessly at Saudia's office at the capital's Karwanbazar and at Dhaka Airport for the past few days seeking solutions regarding their hotel booking but found no designated persons to help them.

One of the migrants said the airlines are avoiding their responsibility by asking expatriate workers to complete the hotel booking process themselves.

"Due to serious complexities in hotel booking, many migrant workers might fail to go to Saudi Arabia on time. In that case visas of many migrant workers might expire," Fakhrul Islam, former Finance Secretary, BAIRA and President of Recruiting Agency Welfare Organisation of Bangladesh, said.

Tipu Sultan, President, Recruiting Agency Oikya Parishad demanded that the Expatriates' Welfare Ministry come forward to assist the country's remittance earning workers in booking hotels.

Several thousand Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant workers have been facing troubles due to the new travel advisory of Saudi Arabia that requires medical insurance that covers the risk of Covid-19 infections and hotel reservations for seven days of institutional quarantine.

The Saudi authority said violators shall be deported from the country and banned from entering indefinitely into the nation.

After the issuance of a fresh travel advisory that came into effect from May 20, Saudi Arabian Airlines assisted the Saudi-bound workers to book hotels until May 24.

On May 25, the airline's authorities hanged a notice at different points of the office premises and also informed the Saudi-bound migrant workers that from now on they will have to complete the hotel booking process on their own by using specific apps.

In its directives, Saudia asked all Saudi Arabia-bound Bangladeshi workers to book hotels for quarantine stays through the airline's holiday website.

According to the Saudia directives, all Saudi-bound Bangladeshis will have to confirm their quarantine hotel a minimum of 72 hours before their flight departure through the Saudia [Holidays website](#).

"I was supposed to board a Saudia flight on May 26. But I missed the flight as I failed to ensure hotel booking," Tajul Islam, a migrant worker from Noakhali, said.

"At first, officials of Saudia told us to bring BDT 60,000 to book a hotel a day before the flight date. After coming here at Saudia office in the capital's Karwan Bazar, they said that I will have to book a hotel room from Saudi Arabia through Kofil or my travel agent," he added.

"But when contacted, my Kofil advised me to do the hotel booking from Bangladesh," added Tajul.

"Now we are finding no one at the Saudia office either at Karwan Bazar or at Dhaka airport who can give me actual information on hotel booking," he further claimed.

Faruk Mia, from Brahmanbaria, and Mohammad Jibon, from Dhaka, too expressed their grief as they missed their flights scheduled for May 25 and May 26 respectively.