

West Bengal concerned over Bangladesh visa processing fee

A Monitor Report

Date: 15 July, 2021



Kolkata : Residents of West Bengal are stressing over the recent imposition of a visa processing fee by the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata.

They are upset with the fact that only the Bangladesh Commission in Kolkata requires this fee for visa processing whereas other Bangladesh missions in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Guwahati and Agartala, do not.

Also, the visa processing in Kolkata will be outsourced to a private agency, which is not the case elsewhere.

So, visa applicants for Bangladesh who apply in Bangladesh missions elsewhere in India will, as before, apply directly to the high commission, deputy and assistant high Commissions.

The Bangladesh foreign ministry has taken the decision to outsource visa operations in Kolkata because of the 'heavy load' on mission staff.

In 2019, Bangladesh deputy high commission in Kolkata issued more than one lac visas, a four-fold rise in seven years. This Bangladesh mission provides the highest number of visas annually among all foreign missions of Bangladesh abroad.

During Covid, it has also provided 9,000 No Objection Certificates (NOC) to Bangladesh nationals who were stranded in Kolkata, mostly for medical treatment.

While Bangladesh accounts for 23 per cent of India's foreign visitor traffic, West

Bengal accounts for more than 80 per cent of Indian visitors to Bangladesh.

Deputy High Commission points to issuance of at least 600 visas daily - which sometimes cross the 1,000-mark during special occasions like festivals.

Thousands visit their ancestral homes and relatives, many more for business, work and tourism.

After March 2020, visa applications dropped sharply because of the dip in cross-border travel on account of the lockdown in India and Bangladesh due to the Covid pandemic.

However, once things get normal, it is expected that tens of thousands will resume visits.