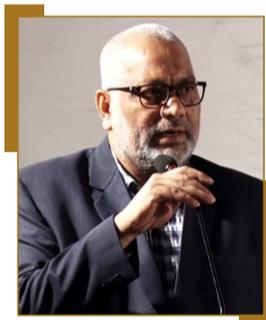


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Two COVID-19 vaccine doses mandatory for pilgrims going on Hajj



Maqsood Ahmed Khan

The Hajj Committee of India has informed that all Muslims intending to go on Hajj this year have to get both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine before leaving for Saudi Arabia. Last year, Saudi Arabia had cancelled entry for outsiders to perform Hajj, instead allowing Muslims living in the kingdom to perform the pilgrimage.

Maqsood Ahmed Khan, CEO, Hajj Committee, said, "It is informed that as per Health Minister of Saudi Arabia and an email from Consulate-General of India, Jeddah, pilgrims visiting the Kingdom need to get two doses of the vaccine before departure for Saudi Arabia." The Hajj this year is supposed to be held from July 17.

UK bans travel from India starting April 23

Travel from India to the UK is being banned for non-UK and Irish citizens from 4am on Friday after the country was added to the travel red list. UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced the "vital but difficult" decision has been made due to a new Covid variant first identified in India, it added.

As a result, travellers from India will be refused entry into the UK unless they are British nationals -- who will then have to mandatorily undergo quarantine procedures.

India simplifies renewal of OCI cards

Rules for issuing OCI (overseas citizen of India) cards have been simplified by the Home Ministry - an individual registered as an OCI cardholder after turning 20 now does not need a new card on issue of a fresh passport. Until now the rules required OCI cards to be re-issued on issue of a new passport (until the individual turns 20) and, once after turning 50, in view of changes to the face as a result of aging.



This rule has now been done away with "to facilitate OCI cardholders" a senior official said. The official said only individuals registering as OCI cardholders prior to turning 20 needed to have the card re-issued, and that too only on getting a new passport, to capture facial features.

Sri Lanka-India travel bubble delayed

Sri Lanka has decided to postpone launching the proposed "travel bubble" with India, in the wake of the recent surge in Covid-19 cases in India, officials at the Ministry of Tourism said.



"We are just postponing the bubble, this is not a cancellation. When things get better in

India, we look forward to launching the travel bubble," said an official at the Ministry. Sri Lanka has been preparing to open up the country for tourists in phases as earnings from the sector, a crucial foreign exchange earner, fell steeply in the pandemic year.

Dubai requires RT-PCR test 48 hrs prior to departure from India w.e.f April 22

Indian airlines announced that RT-PCR negative test reports for passengers from India to Dubai should be issued within 48 hours from the time of sample collection with effect from April 22.

"Effective April 22, 2021, all passengers travelling from India to Dubai Airport must hold a valid COVID-19 test certificate that is issued within 48 hours from the time of collecting the samples and also ensure the time of the sample collection (date and time) and time of reporting result (date and time) are accurate," Air India Express said in a travel update.

