

BHUTAN ENDS FREE ENTRY FOR INDIAN TOURISTS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Bhutan

Ending decades of free entry to Indian tourists visiting Bhutan, the government in Thimphu has decided to levy a daily Rs. 1,200 (\$17) fee for “regional tourists” from India, the Maldives and Bangladesh, beginning July 2020. The fee, called a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), is meant to help the government deal with burgeoning numbers in tourist traffic, which it is seeking to regulate through a new tourism policy.

The decision was passed by the National Assembly on Tuesday as a ‘Tourism Levy and Exemption Bill of Bhutan’, 2020. The SDF is considerably lower than the \$65 charged to other foreign tourists, who are also charged a compulsory flat “cover charge” of \$250 per day.

Indians mainly travel to the more developed western region of Bhutan. In a move to promote tourism in Bhutan’s eastern region as well, the government has decided to drop SDF charges for tourists visiting 11 of 20 total districts that fall in the east from Trongsa to Trashigang.

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