

The High Commission of Sri Lanka in New Delhi and the Deputy High Commission of Sri Lanka in Chennai, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Buddha Sasana, continue their coordinating and facilitating endeavours for the early return of Sri Lankan Buddhist pilgrims currently in India, following the temporary closure of the Bandaranaike International Airport for inward commercial flights.

During the day of 18 March, approximately 700 pilgrims returned to Sri Lanka from India by scheduled commercial flights and the High Commission of Sri Lanka in New Delhi and the Deputy High Commission of Sri Lanka in Chennai facilitated their return travel, including through discussions with the relevant airlines to reschedule tickets.

Following the departure of the last scheduled commercial flight to Sri Lanka from New Delhi on midnight of 18 March before the temporary closure of the Bandaranaike International Airport, as of today (19 March 2020) at 10:00 hrs. a total of 871 Sri Lankan Buddhist pilgrims, belonging to 17 tour groups were remaining in India, expecting to return to Sri Lanka from New Delhi and Chennai.

The Sri Lanka Missions are closely in touch with these remaining tour groups in preparation for special aircraft that would be arranged by the Government of Sri Lanka to take them back home.

In the meantime, SriLankan Airlines would also be accepting returning Sri Lankan pilgrims to the flights that it is operating to Delhi and Chennai daily for transit passengers. These flights are scheduled to leave Delhi and Chennai daily at 18:30 hrs. and 09:35 hrs. respectively, during the period 19-25 March 2020.

The two Missions are also working with Sri Lankan Airlines to accommodate the remaining pilgrims in these flights according to the availability of seats.

High Commission of Sri Lanka
New Delhi

19 March 2020