

Thailand suspends quarantine-free entry over omicron concerns

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 21 December, 2021



Dhaka: Thailand has suspended its quarantine-free entry programme till January 4 over fears relating to omicron spread.

The Covid-19 panel chaired by Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha halted the approval of visitors for quarantine-free entry till January 4 amid rising imported cases of the new strain.

The suspension comes in less than two months since Thailand started welcoming tourists without quarantine, owing to concerns about the potential spread of the omicron variant of coronavirus by incoming tourists.

The Deputy Prime Minister Supattanapong Punmeechaow said the Covid panel will reassess the policy on January 4.

Earlier, Thailand waived the requirement for over 60 jurisdictions in November, provided travellers were fully vaccinated and had negative tests for the virus both before and immediately after arriving in the country.

About 200,000 visitors previously approved to enter without quarantine will still be allowed in, although they would be closely-monitored and must comply with additional measures

like having two PCR tests while in Thailand upon arrival and on the seventh day in the country, said Government Spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana at a briefing.

Of the travellers approved for quarantine-free entry, 110,000 have already arrived, the premier added.

Reimposing a lockdown will be a last resort, claimed Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

Overseas travellers can still enter Thailand through the country's normal quarantine process and its Phuket Sandbox programme.

The suspension comes at a time when the tourism dependent country was recovering economically following the coronavirus pandemic.

The government forecasts as many as 15 million tourists in 2022 would provide revenue of as much as THB 1.8 trillion (USD 53.4 billion).

The World Bank in mid-December warned that reimposing travel restrictions could lead to an economic contraction of 0.3 per cent in 2022 instead of the 3.9 per cent growth it was projecting.