

US lifts travel restrictions on eight southern African countries

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 25 December, 2021



Dhaka: USA's Biden administration is going to lift travel restrictions on eight southern African countries imposed in November over concerns about the fast-spreading Covid-19 Omicron variant, announced the White House on December 24.

Foreign nationals who are banned from the United States because they have been in one of the eight countries within the prior 14 days will again be allowed on US-bound flights leaving after 12:01 am ET on December 31, a senior official said, according to reports.

The United States on November 29 banned nearly all non-US citizens who had recently been in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique and Malawi in an "abundance of caution" over the variant detected in South Africa.

White House spokesman Kevin Munoz in a tweet said the decision to lift the restrictions was recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"The restrictions gave us time to understand Omicron and we know our existing vaccines work against Omicron, esp boosted," Munoz tweeted, mentioned reports.

Earlier US public health agencies had recommended lifting the travel restrictions because

retaining them would have not a significant impact on US cases given the widespread current US transmission, confidence that an Omicron-specific vaccine would not be necessary and that existing vaccines and booster shots are highly effective.