

Vietnam proposes full reopening to int'l tourists from March

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Vietnam's tourism ministry on February 15 proposed a full reopening of the country to foreign visitors, lifting of nearly all travel restrictions from March 15, three months before than earlier planned.

The proposal to be submitted to the Prime Minister for approval, follows similar reopening steps taken by other Southeast Asian neighbours Thailand and the Philippines, where the Omicron Covid-19 variant has caused a recent spike in new infections, but fewer hospitalisations and deaths than previous variants.

The proposal included maintaining a one-day quarantine requirement for visitors plus requiring negative Covid-19 tests before departure and on arrival.

Vietnam announced a record 31,814 new coronavirus cases on February 15, adding to over 2.54 million infections so far while it records about 39,000 deaths overall.

The country imposed one of the world's strictest border controls two years ago following the coronavirus outbreak. The move dealt a severe blow to its growing tourism industry, which accounted for about 10 per cent of gross domestic product in pre-pandemic times.

Foreign arrivals fell to 157,000 in 2021, compared to 18 million in 2019, according to reports.

Nearly 77 per cent of its 98 million population has been vaccinated, according to official data.

Since November 2021, Vietnam has been allowing foreign tourists to visit designated places under a vaccine passport programme and had originally aimed to fully reopen the industry from June. Now the tourism ministry is proposing to reopen borders fully from March.

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