

Taiwan reopens to tourists after lifting Covid-19 rules

A Monitor Report

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Taipei : Taiwan has reopened to tourists en masse after lifting some of the world's longest-lasting pandemic border controls.

Visitors began arriving on the island on October 13 without the need for quarantine or PCR tests for the first time in more than two and a half years.

Taiwanese officials welcomed the first group of visitors arriving on a flight from Bangkok shortly after midnight at the island's main international airport near Taipei.

Tourism Bureau Director-General Chang Shi-chung said the island's reopening was a chance to "bring back to life and rebuild cross-border tourism".

Taiwan is the last major economy to lift Covid-19 quarantine apart from mainland China, which has stuck to an ultra-strict "Zero Covid" policy despite the global trend towards living with the virus.

Japan and Hong Kong recently dropped pandemic-related border restrictions as part of efforts to revive their battered travel industries.

Visitors to the self-governing island had been required to spend three days in isolation after authorities earlier this year cut the quarantine period from 10 and then seven days. Under the new border arrangements, visitors are still required to monitor their health for seven days and take rapid antigen tests.

The island recorded relatively few Covid-19 cases until the highly infectious Omicron variant and its sub-variants began spreading locally in January.

Despite reporting more than 6.5 million infections since then, more than 99.5 per cent of cases have been mild or asymptomatic, according to Taiwan's health authorities.