

Thailand targets wider tourism reopening in October

A Monitor Report

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Bangkok : Thailand is planning to waive its mandatory quarantine for vaccinated visitors to its capital Bangkok and top tourist destinations from October, a concerned government official said on May 7, in an effort to revive the country's one of the most high-earning industry harmed by the coronavirus travel restrictions.

The new measure means easier access to tourism hotspots like Pattaya, Phang Nga, Koh Samui, Krabi and the capital Bangkok, Deputy Government spokeswoman Traisulee Traisoranakul said, among 10 provinces that will welcome tourists with proof of vaccination against Covid from October 1.

Thailand has since a year ago tightened visa processes and required all visitors and returning residents to undergo 14 days of quarantine in government-approved facilities.

The announcement comes as the resort island of Phuket prepares to open to vaccinated travellers in July in a pilot scheme for the broader plan. It is seeking to inoculate most of its residents before the reopening, and before mass vaccinations begin in the rest of Thailand.

Tourism a key source of income and jobs for Thailand. In 2019, it welcomed a record

39.9 million visitors who spent THB 1.91 trillion (USD 61.32 billion). That compared with 6.7 million arrivals last year.

The new plan could draw 3.5 million tourists this year, generating THB 298 billion (USD 9.58 billion) in revenue, Traisulee said in a statement, adding that at least 70 per cent of residents in each of the 10 provinces must first be inoculated.

Thailand had until last month experienced only minor outbreaks and has been slow to procure and administer Covid-19 vaccines, with only 1.6 million doses used so far. Health Minister Anutin Charnvirankul said on May 7, he expects 10 million to 20 million doses of the Pfizer (PFE.N) vaccine to be available in the second half of the year.

The rush to secure vaccines comes after Thailand was hit early last month by its biggest outbreak yet, which has seen its total cases more than double and deaths more than triple.

The country is also going ahead with its reopening plan for its resort island Phuket in July even as the country struggles to contain its worst Covid outbreak since the pandemic began amid slow vaccinations, said the national tourism panel.

However, currently travellers from Bangladesh is banned to enter Thailand following the discovery of the Indian variant of coronavirus in the country. The Thai embassy in Bangladesh stopped issuing certificates of entry for non-Thai nationals from May 10.