Canada drops all Covid-19 travel restrictions

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Dhaka : Canada has dropped all Covid-19 restrictions for travellers from October 1, including vaccination and masking requirements for flights and trains.

The move is likely to boost the Canadian travel industry, already booming after months of lull during the pandemic.

Canadian carriers were also pressing for an end to mask mandates on flights, citing thousands of incidents of non-compliance this year alone.

"As Canadians and international visitors look to make travel plans, the long-awaited removal of all remaining measures effective October 1, 2022 has further expedited recovery for our industry and the Canadian economy," Canada's second-largest carrier WestJet Airlines said in a statement.

The decision to end restrictions was based on Canada's vaccination rate, availability of newer vaccines and treatments and data showing the country had passed the peak of the latest wave of coronavirus infections, the government said.

More than 90 per cent of Canadians over 12 have taken the primary series of a Covid vaccine. In September, Canada authorised Moderna Inc's (MRNA.O) bivalent Covid-19 shots for adults, the country's first Omicron-adapted vaccine.

"Thanks largely to Canadians who have rolled up their sleeves to get vaccinated, we have reached the point where we can safely lift the sanitary measures at the border," Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos said.

Duclos said the government was prepared to reinstate restrictions if needed.

"Obviously we have no hope to reintroduce some of these measures but if we need to protect the safety of Canadians, we will have to," he told reporters in Ottawa.

Travellers, regardless of citizenship, will not have to submit health information through the ArriveCAN app or provide proof of vaccination from October 1.

A requirement for travellers to wear masks on planes and trains would also be dropped.

Cruise ship passengers and crew would also no longer be subject to vaccine requirements or Covid testing.