

Hong Kong and Singapore reach in-principle agreement to establish bilateral Air Travel Bubble

Hong Kong and Singapore have reached an in-principle agreement to establish a bilateral Air Travel Bubble (ATB). This milestone arrangement will help revive cross-border air travel between the two aviation hubs, in a safe and progressive way.

Hong Kong and Singapore enjoy strong trade, investment, finance, tourism and people-to-people ties. Both cities are major aviation hubs, and the international air route between the two cities was among the busiest in the Asia-Pacific region pre-COVID-19. Travel links between Hong Kong and Singapore are important for both cities.

The in-principle agreement was reached during a videoconference on October 14 between the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, Mr Edward Yau, and the Minister for Transport of the Republic of Singapore, Mr Ong Ye Kung.

The key features of the ATB are as follows:

- (a) there are no restrictions on travel purpose;
- (b) travellers under the ATB will be subject to mutually recognised COVID-19 polymerase chain reaction tests and would need to have negative test results;
- (c) travellers under the ATB will not be subject to any quarantine or Stay-Home Notice requirements, or a controlled itinerary;
- (d) travellers under the ATB will be required to travel on dedicated flights, i.e. these flights will only serve ATB travellers and no transit passengers or non-ATB travellers will be allowed on board; and
- (e) the ATB can be scaled by adjusting the number of dedicated flights upwards or downwards, or even suspended, in line with the latest developments and COVID-19 situation in the two cities.

"I am pleased that both sides have agreed on the key features to underpin the expeditious conclusion of the ATB between two major international aviation hubs in the world. This is a milestone in our efforts to resume normalcy while fighting against the long-drawn battle of COVID-19. Hong Kong and Singapore enjoy long-time close and cordial co-operation on many fronts. I have every confidence that the ATB arrangement can come to fruition very soon to facilitate resumption of air travel between our two economies," Mr Yau said.

"Both our cities have low incidence of COVID-19 cases and have put in place robust mechanisms to manage and control COVID-19," Mr Ong said. "This

has given us the confidence to mutually and progressively open our borders to each other. It is significant that our two regional aviation hubs have decided to collaborate to establish an Air Travel Bubble. It is a safe, careful but significant step forward to revive air travel, and provide a model for future collaboration with other parts of the world."

With a view to achieving early implementation, both governments are committed to fleshing out the full details of the ATB in the coming weeks and look forward to the resumption of travel between both cities, with the necessary safeguards in place to ensure that public health concerns of both sides are addressed.

The launch date of the Hong Kong-Singapore ATB and other implementation details will be announced in due course.