

SCED speaks on Hong Kong-Singapore Air Travel Bubble

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, on the Hong Kong-Singapore Air Travel Bubble at a media session after attending an event today (May 14):

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I have been in touch with my counterpart, the Minister for Transport of the Singapore Government, both yesterday and today. We actually had a telephone conversation this morning. He has updated me on the situation in Singapore, particularly on the recent increase of confirmed cases within the city.

He shared with me that there are additional measures to be taken by the Singapore Government locally to curb the recent increase. We have full confidence that the Singapore Government will continue to do so. Hong Kong and Singapore have agreed earlier on the mechanism on when to start, resume or suspend the bilateral travelling. The Singapore Minister told me that there might be a high chance that the bubble arrangement may not be able to resume as scheduled on May 26 under the agreed mechanism. We will review the situation, particularly in the next couple of days, in light of the additional measures. I will talk to the new Minister for Transport who will succeed Minister Ong (Mr Ong Ye Kung) early next week. We will continue to review the situation and give the community the earliest news on when and how we would be moving ahead or any other changes.

Reporter: Secretary, two English questions. When will the final decision be made about the scheme? Whether the scheme will be continued or not? The second questions is, Singapore travellers to Hong Kong do not have to be vaccinated according to the original plan. Do you think adjustment is needed regarding this in future plans?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I hope to give a more definite answer early next week, when I have a further discussion with the new Minister for Transport when he assumes office, and also taking into account of the things to happen in the next few days. We hope to give a more definite answer early next week, on whether and when the bubble arrangement would be launched or otherwise.

The mutual, bilateral arrangement has captured some of the common features which are essential, including the "double tests", both pre-boarding and upon arrival, as well as the dedicated flights. It captured some tracing and tracking mechanisms. It also built in certain clearance days, for which visitors would need to observe before taking advantage of the arrangement. Of course, the vaccine is now an additional safeguard. As I said before, it is a matter for individual governments to consider how best to protect their own people joining the arrangement. So, at this stage, it remains our stance that Hong Kong residents going out, joining this arrangement, are required to be

fully vaccinated. Of course, we welcome incoming passengers, or any passengers, to be fully vaccinated for extra protection.

Reporter: Are you disappointed by this possible delay again?

Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development: I have mentioned this before. We must make our best endeavour to plan for the best arrangement because a lot of people want to have resumed travel for various reasons. But of course, we need to prepare for the worst. If the circumstances do not allow, we should take absolute precautions for protecting all the visitors and our respective communities. That's exactly the reason why we need to have the mechanism, exactly the reason why we keep in contact very closely, from time to time, sometimes on a weekly or even daily basis. Also, that's why we need to make an early announcement if circumstances seem to be moving in a different direction. So, I hope I will maintain this practice and inform our community what's next, so that we can plan better for the circumstances.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)