

Speech by FS at Cathay Pacific Hong Kong-Riyadh Route Launch Ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Cathay Pacific Hong Kong-Riyadh Route Launch Ceremony today (October 28):

Pat (Chairman of Cathay Group, Mr Patrick Healy), Consul General (Consul General of Saudi Arabia, Mr Hamad Aljebreen), Vivian (Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Airport Authority Hong Kong, Mrs Vivian Cheung), fellow travellers and ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Great to see you all and I know it will be a pleasure to depart, with you, on the inaugural flight of this newly relaunched, Hong Kong to Riyadh, non-stop service.

For that, for reconnecting Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, and for organising today's ceremony, my heartfelt thanks to Cathay Pacific – our home airline and certainly one of the world's best airlines.

Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, of course, have been reconnecting for some time now, and in various ways, from official government visits, bilateral agreements, business delegations and investments.

The relaunched Cathay service symbolises the growing ties between Hong Kong, Asia's best international financial hub and Riyadh, the capital and financial centre of Saudi Arabia. And I am confident it will accelerate business, cultural and people-to-people ties between our two cities and our two economies.

Indeed, the delegation I am privileged to lead to Riyadh counts more than 100 high-profile financial, business and I&T (innovation and technology) leaders from Hong Kong. During our visit, we will attend the Future Investment Initiative, and engage in meaningful dialogues with political and business leaders as well as investors in the Middle East and from around the world. Our goal is to promote Hong Kong's unique strengths as a "super connector" and "super value-adder", tell the good stories of Hong Kong to enlarge our friends and business circles and to explore collaboration leading to mutual benefits.

Catalysing economic exchanges

In short, this route will unlock new opportunities for investment, trade, and collaboration, particularly in areas such as innovation and technology.

And, as Hong Kong continues to expand its role in the Greater Bay Area

and the Belt and Road Initiative, this connection will surely fast track the future success of both regions. As Patrick noted, Cathay personifies the Air Silk Road, flying now to 27 destinations in Belt and Road countries.

Supporting Vision 2030

The service also aligns aptly with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, an ambitious national initiative designed to diversify the Kingdom's economy through tourism, investment and innovation.

With Hong Kong as a global financial and trade centre, and gateway to Asia, this flight will help enable the two-way flow of goods, services and people, contributing to Vision 2030's success.

Cathay's Riyadh service also boosts air connectivity between Hong Kong and the Middle East. And that only underlines Hong Kong's status as a global aviation hub.

Hong Kong International Airport expansion

It's a role long in the planning. Before year's end, we will commission the Three-Runway System at Hong Kong International Airport. That will help us meet the growing demands of global travel and cargo services.

By 2035, our Airport will be able to handle 120 million passengers and 10 million tonnes of cargo a year. And thanks to Cathay Pacific's investment in its fleet, the airline will grow alongside our expanding airport infrastructure, supporting Hong Kong's strategic development.

Ladies and gentlemen, today's flight is more than a 10-hour journey. It's a gateway to deeper collaboration and a mutually rewarding future for Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's join our hands together to give a round of applause to Cathay Pacific and Saudi Arabia for our future success and continuing friendship.

Thank you.



