

HKSARG welcomes Thailand's announcement to establish special travel arrangement for cross-border control with Hong Kong

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The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) and the Thailand Board of Investment jointly organised a webinar titled "Resilience Strategy: Thailand-Hong Kong Partnership" today (June 29). The Deputy Secretary General to the Prime Minister for Political Affairs of Thailand, Dr Kobsak Pootrakool, said in the webinar that the Government of Thailand announced this afternoon the decision to set up a special travel arrangement for cross-border control with five economies including Hong Kong as a first step in relaxing its inbound passenger control.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government welcomed the announcement. A newly established inter-departmental team will start discussing with the relevant departments in the Thai Government in the coming week or two.

"This is a very encouraging news for both Hong Kong and Thailand. If the special relaxation arrangements for cross-border control can be established between the two places, cross-boundary business exchange can be gradually resumed for Hong Kong, which is set to give a tremendous boost to our economic recovery," the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said.

"Hong Kong and Thailand have enjoyed very strong and long-standing economic and trade relations and people-to-people connection. For the past five years, an average of nearly 900 000 Hong Kong people have visited Thailand every year while over 500 000 Thai visitors have come to Hong Kong. Building on the foundation laid down in the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Economic Relations' signed between the two governments in November last year, as well as achievements made in fighting the epidemic in both places, we are keen to explore with the Government of Thailand the special travel arrangement. We are confident that we can reach an agreement expeditiously and become one of each other's first partners of the special travel arrangement for cross-border control.

"On establishing the relevant mechanism with Thailand, it is most important to contain the potential risk brought about by the increase of passenger flow and continuously monitor the epidemic development and prevention work of the two places while relaxing the control on inbound passenger traffic progressively. The overall goal is to strike a balance between economic considerations and epidemic control. The

discussion between the two sides will be based on science and aim to formulate simple and practical operation procedures with appropriate health control and protocol. The relevant discussion will touch on details of the relaxation measures for cross-border control, specific operation arrangements to reduce the risks of spreading the virus across the borders, the provision of transport services and more," Mr Yau added.

The inter-departmental team will be led by the Commissioner for Tourism and comprise representatives from bureaux and departments such as the Food and Health Bureau, the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Department of Health, etc.

Today's webinar not only provided a platform to share experience and insights of Hong Kong on applications of innovation and technology (I&T) to combat the coronavirus disease 2019 and in response to related livelihood needs, but also showcased the strengths of Hong Kong's I&T enterprises and research capabilities and services. It also facilitated Hong Kong enterprises intending to expand into the Thai market to better understand the local business environment, thereby fostering closer economic and trade collaboration with Thailand.

The Secretary General of the Thailand Board of Investment, Ms Duangjai Asawachintachit, also participated at the webinar where she outlined investment opportunities in Thailand that are available to Hong Kong enterprises.

A panel discussion session titled "Hong Kong's Role in Regional Co-operation and Business Partnership" was also featured in the webinar. Moderated by the Convenor of the Non-official Members of the Executive Council, Mr Bernard Chan, the session offered insights in the areas of trade, economic and I&T, as well as future opportunities on Hong Kong-Thailand partnership. Panelists of the session included the Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Dr Peter Lam; the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, Dr Sunny Chai; the Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, Dr Daniel Yip; and the Chairman of hpa (Ho & Partners Architects Engineers & Development Consultants Limited), Mr Nicholas Ho, who has investment projects in Thailand.

Participants of the webinar noted that the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) could achieve synergy through complimentary co-operation of these three places, and that Hong Kong could act as a two-way open platform for "going global" together with GBA cities. Development of GBA could drive the development of the mid-south and southwest regions of the Mainland. This could

also reinforce an important economic support belt for Southeast Asia including Thailand, and compliment the Belt and Road Initiative.

The webinar attracted nearly 600 participants from chambers of commerce, small and medium enterprises and start-ups in Hong Kong and Thailand.

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