

Designated flights under HK-Singapore Air Travel Bubble to launch November 22

The Governments of Hong Kong and Singapore today (November 11) announced the detailed arrangements of the bilateral Air Travel Bubble (ATB), with designated flights to be launched on November 22, taking a significant step forward in resuming cross-border air travel between the two places in an orderly manner.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, said, "This is the very first ATB for Hong Kong. It matters not only for cross-border travel between the two places, but also reflects the Government's hope to progressively restore the city's economic activities amid the long-drawn battle against COVID-19.

"Hong Kong and Singapore are similar in terms of epidemic control. Both are regional aviation hubs and international cities, enjoying strong trade, investment, finance, tourism and people-to-people ties. The revival of cross-border air travel between the two places is of utmost importance. We hope that aviation, tourism, hotel, retail and catering businesses can benefit from it, thereby enabling Hong Kong's economy to recover gradually," he said.

Under the ATB arrangement, travellers between the two places will not be subject to any quarantine arrangements upon arrival, nor restrictions to their travel purposes or itineraries on the condition that they comply with a set of anti-epidemic protocols.

There are stringent measures in place to safeguard public health under the arrangement, including mutually recognised COVID-19 tests, designated flights for ATB passengers as well as a scalable mechanism to adjust the ATB arrangement having regard to the epidemic situation. All measures are meant to resume cross-border air travel in a safe and progressive manner.

On COVID-19 testing, the ATB travellers must have tested negative in mutually recognised tests taken within 72 hours before their departure. They must also have no travel history to any places other than Singapore or Hong Kong in the last 14 days prior to their departure. The ATB travellers must travel on designated flights to minimise risks. The number of designated flights arriving at Hong Kong will increase progressively, from one flight per day in the first 15 days to two flights per day thereafter depending on the actual implementation. Each designated flight can carry a

maximum of 200 ATB travellers. All ATB travellers must undertake COVID-19 tests again via a designated lane at the airport upon arrival at Hong Kong, and then wait at a restricted area of the airport until the receipt of negative test results so that they may leave the airport and start their itineraries.

In addition, the scalable mechanism put in place under the ATB arrangement allows the scale of the ATB to be instantly and flexibly adjusted depending on the epidemic situation of both places and travellers' demands. In short, if the seven-day moving average of the daily number of unlinked local COVID-19 cases is more than five for either Singapore or Hong Kong, the ATB arrangement will be suspended for two weeks. If the relevant figure reported on the last day of the suspension period does not exceed the specified threshold of five, the ATB arrangement can resume. Details of the ATB arrangement are set out in the Annex.

Mr Yau said that not only will the implementation of the ATB arrangement facilitate resumption of air travel between Hong Kong and Singapore, but will also help enable Hong Kong's discussions with places, with epidemic situations controlled, on resuming cross-border travel in an orderly manner.

To dovetail with the above development, the Government announced that the application deadline for the Travel Agents Incentive Scheme will be extended to March 31, 2021, to allow more travel agents to make full use of the scheme through inbound and outbound tours.

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