

APAC COVID-19 Landscape Update Updated 8 December 2020

1. Overview

- **South Korea** has urged its citizens to cancel year-end Christmas and New Year parties as daily Covid-19 cases hit a nine-month high. Government preparing to impose tighter social-distancing rules in Seoul
- Hong Kong has urged residents to avoid unnecessary family gatherings as the city scrambles to contain a resurgence in Covid-19 cases. They suggest Imported cases are also a key factor for the resurgence of infection cases.
- **Thailand** aiming to track down potential Covid-19 clusters in northern regions.
- **Indonesia** recorded its biggest daily rise in infections on 3 December with 8,369 new cases. This brings Indonesia's infections total to 557,877, among the highest in Asia.
- **Singapore & Hong Kong** delayed the launch of its much-anticipated travel bubble to 2021. Both Singapore and Hong Kong have shared that the arrangement will be reviewed in late December

Vaccine Discussions :

- **Australia & Vaccine** - reviewing the viability of Covid-19 vaccines, with Australia's pharmaceutical regulator announcing that it is on course to review Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine by January 2021.
- **Singapore & Vaccine** – SG Health Sciences Authority (HSA) said it is evaluating the available data submitted by Moderna to ensure “expeditious review” of results of their phase 3 study showing 94% effective rate against Covid-19 in general and 100% effective in preventing severe Covid-19 cases.
- **Japan** contracted Moderna Inc to provide vaccines, and has basic agreements with Astrazeneca Plc and Pfizer Inc. The Japanese parliament has passed a Bill to provide Covid-19 vaccinations free of charge with the central government funding the cost.

2. Political Developments

- The launch of the travel bubble [Singapore and Hong Kong](#) has been further delayed. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) stated that both cities have decided to defer the start of the air travel bubble to beyond this month, given that the number of local unlinked cases in Hong Kong is still high. So far, Hong Kong has a total of more than 6,300 cases, including 109 deaths. The exact start date will be reviewed late this December 2020.

3. Regulatory Developments

- [Australia's](#) pharmaceutical regulator said that it is on course to review Pfizer's Covid-19 vaccine by January 2021, with the country sticking to a March timetable to start vaccinations.
- [Britain](#) announced that it has approved the use of the Pfizer vaccine, jumping ahead of the rest of the world in the race to begin the most crucial mass inoculation programme in history. Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said getting a vaccine out by then would boost the country's economy by A\$34 billion (US\$25 billion) compared with earlier assumptions of 2022.

- Moderna Inc is continuing to submit results data on its Covid-19 vaccine suitability to the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) in [Singapore](#). HSA started evaluating the available data submitted by Moderna to ensure “expeditious review”. Moderna announced “forging ahead” with the rolling review process for approval with HSA. This process allows companies to submit real-time data from ongoing studies of the vaccine while the regulatory review is conducted simultaneously.
- [Japan's](#) Parliament passed a Bill to provide Covid-19 vaccinations free of charge with central government covering the cost. The Bill’s passage also makes local governments responsible for administering the immunisations, according to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Recently the Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has ordered to partially suspend a travel incentive programme intended to shore up suffering regional economies.
- [Malaysia's](#) Langkawi Chinese Chamber of Commerce (LCCC) has urged the government to postpone the implementation of duties on duty-free cigarettes until a proper study is completed. LCCC vice-president Ku Chin Loon said failure to do so may result in the island losing significant revenue with businesses going under, causing more job losses and exacerbating the impact of Covid-19 on tourism in Langkawi. The LCCC called into question the analysis used by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to categorise duty-free islands as hubs for illegal cigarettes and iterated that businesses and retailers in Langkawi are more than willing to cooperate with the Ministry of Finance to review its analysis.

4. Industry Developments

- We, the [Asia Pacific Travel Retail Association \(APTRA\)](#) has stepped up our support for the travel retail sector in a joint effort with the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA); the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA), Airports Council International (ACI) Asia-Pacific and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to push governments to aid business recovery. Together, as a collective voice calls on ministers from across the region to fully implement the guidance and recommendations in ICAO’s Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures Manual.
- The region’s tourism has suffered tremendously. Taking [Indonesia](#), as an example, Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data have show foreign tourist arrivals picked up slightly in October but still down 88% year-on-year (yoy) The accommodation and food services sector contracted 11.86 percent yoy in the third quarter, making it the second-worst performing sector. The Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) has estimated that the Covid-19 pandemic has cost the country’s tourist industry Rp 100 trillion (US\$7 billion). Some 79% of hotel workers have been laid off or furloughed. We estimate a similar story across SE Asia’s tourist spots in terms of YOY percentage depreciation.
- [Malaysia Airports](#) are hoping to see a restart in Q1 2021 as Southeast travel. They also suggested that the pilgrimage travel to Saudi Arabia will begin again soon after the Middle Eastern state opened to Umrah visitors on 1 November. Announcing its past nine-month results, Malaysia Airports said that domestic traffic had climbed more than fourfold in September since the country relaxed a ban on inter-state travel in June. The company expects domestic seat load factors to hit 70% of capacity in 2021 compared to around 50% today. In the nine to months to 30 September, the Malaysia Airports network reportedly down by -65.5% year-on-year.
- [Airports of Thailand \(AOT\)](#) confirmed today that it expects traffic across its six airports to reach 2019 levels by fiscal year 2023. The company has revised its projections for the next two years but maintained its original forecast from June that overall passenger volumes would exceed last year’s 141.8 million by 2023. AOT suggest international traffic recovery would lag behind domestic growth for the next two years due to continued restriction. AOT concession revenues Jan-Sept fell by -53.3%.

Annex A

Appended are the list and description of the various schemes currently in place by various countries in Asia.

1. BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

a. **Travel Corridor:** Caters to essential business and official travel

Countries	
Australia	New Zealand
China	South Korea
Indonesia	China, Japan (pending implementation details), South Korea, United Arab Emirates (UAE)
India	Japan
Japan	Indonesia (pending implementation details), Korea, Singapore, Vietnam
Singapore	Brunei, China, Germany (pending implementation details), Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea
Taiwan	Australia, Bhutan, Brunei, Fiji, Hong Kong, Japan, , Malaysia, Macau, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam

b. **Others:** Schemes targeted to allow for the movement of long term residents between two countries (e.g. Periodic Commuting Arrangement between Singapore and Malaysia)

Countries	
Singapore	Malaysia - Periodic Commuting Arrangement covering long-term work permit holders from both countries, who must have at least resided in the respective country for 90 days
	Japan - Residence Track Scheme covering nationals from both countries who are holders of Work Passes and those who have been granted work passes in principle

Travellers on the above mentioned schemes are subjected to the various health control measures which generally include rules such as:

- Swab tests at pre departure and arrival points
- Controlled itinerary
- Reduced quarantine time
- To be sponsored by a business or government entity in the traveller's country of arrival

- c. **Travel Bubble:** Designed for general / leisure travel **without the need** to serve a mandatory quarantine and a controlled itinerary. For the travel bubble between Singapore and Hong Kong, only a maximum of 200 people will be permitted on each flight with travelers from both cities required to take designated bubble flights and fulfil requirements, including undergoing up to three Covid-19 tests at various stages of the journey. The arrangement has been delayed to 2021, with an exact date to be reviewed at end-December.

Countries	
Singapore	Hong Kong (Delayed to 2021)

2. UNILATERAL AGREEMENTS

- a. **Unilateral openings** are a standing invitation from Singapore to these countries, which have comprehensive public health surveillance systems and have successfully controlled Covid-19's spread. Currently, only Singapore has unveiled such initiative for general / leisure travellers from an approved list of countries - Australia (except Victoria state), Brunei, New Zealand, Vietnam.

Known as the **Air Travel Pass**, individuals must comply with measures such as:

- o Having remained in the approved list of countries for 14 days prior to their arrival into Singapore
- o Swab tests at departure and arrival points
- o Pre-declared controlled itinerary
- o Downloading the relevant contact tracing application
