

## APAC COVID-19 Landscape Update Updated 25 January 2021

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### 1. Overview

In fear of the highly contagious new strain, countries in the Asia Pacific are increasing restrictions or closing even their borders.

- [Japan](#) government has expanded the Covid-19 state of emergency and suspended fast-track business travel permits, thus fully banning foreign visitors.
- [Hong Kong](#) have increased their quarantine to 21 days and increased testing of mass residential areas.
- [Philippines](#) have surged past ½ million cases, The government is now faced with criticism for failing to immediately launch a vaccination program.

### 2. Travel

- [New Zealand](#) and Cook Islands has agreed to a one-way travel bubble. Travellers from Cook Islands can start quarantine-free travel to New Zealand
- [Singapore and Malaysia](#) will continue the Reciprocal Green Lane and Periodic Commuting Arrangement travel schemes between lockdown within Malaysia.
- [Sri Lanka](#) will reopen its borders to foreign tourists this week after a 10-month hiatus, with travellers subject to tough Covid-19 protocols. The minister has also approved a new guideline for international arrivals, suggesting no quarantines. Read more in this report, under Regulatory Development

### 3. Vaccines

- [China's](#) Sinovac Biotech defended its Covid-19 vaccine, suggesting it is being rolled out from Indonesia to Brazil despite inconsistent data readouts stating that it is more effective in preventing the disease if the two-dose regime is administered over a longer time frame.
- [China](#) Supports other SE Asia Countries with vaccine donations. Aimed at boosting post-pandemic recovery efforts, 16 Jan 2021 China announced
  - Philippines to receive half million Covid-19 vaccine doses
  - Cambodia to receive one million Covid-19 vaccine doses
  - Myanmar is set to receive 300,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses
- [India](#) started vaccinating its 1.3 billion people against Covid-19 on 16 January.
- [India](#) plans to offer 20 million doses of Covid19 vaccine to neighbouring countries. Purchasing the serum from Institute of India and Bharat Biotech International to supply to Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Seychelles and Mauritius. Some supplies maybe free recognised as aid relief

- [Australia](#) administering the first Covid-19 vaccines in February, as the country moves to accelerate its inoculation programme
- [Fiji](#)'s health ministry has suggested they will manage the end to end process of vaccination procurement and administration. Fiji's Minister for Health Ifereimi Waqainabete said they have completed the training of the staff.
- [Philippines](#) has secured 30 million doses of a Covid-19 vaccine developed by US drug maker Novavax. This is only the second vaccine deal signed by the national government.
- [Thailand](#) had ordered an additional 35 million doses of the AstraZeneca Plc Covid-19 vaccine, bringing its total vaccine pipeline to 63 million doses.

## 2. Political Developments

- A report by the [Singapore University of Technology and Design](#) (SUTD) stated that the ASEAN Secretariat should look at ways to set up a regional air travel bubble for pan-ASEAN leisure travel with no quarantine.
- One way quarantine free travel [Cook Islands](#) to New Zealand from 21 January, but New Zealand-based people will have to wait until later in the year to visit the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands is one of the few countries to remain Covid-19-free.
- The [New Zealand](#) government still plans to establish a trans-Tasman travel “bubble” by April.
- All travellers to [New Zealand](#) from the UK or US are required to return a negative Covid-19 test prior to departure. Starting 15 Jan 2021. All travellers must present a certified laboratory test or another form of approved evidence, confirming a negative result in the 72 hours prior to departure.
- [Australia](#)'s health department has said that the country may not fully reopen its international borders this year even if most of the population is vaccinated.
- [Japan](#) will temporarily suspend entry for business travellers from 11 Asian countries, effectively banning the entry of non-resident foreign travellers, until 7 February. [Japan](#) has even stopped [temporarily suspend exemptions](#) allowing foreign athletes to train in the country ahead of the Summer Olympics until 7 February.
- [Hong Kong](#) has extended its ban on all commercial flights from the UK and South Africa until further notice.
- [Indonesia](#)'s chief economic minister announced on 11 January that the country will extend its ban on foreign arrivals for another 14 days.
- [Philippines](#) extended travel ban until 31 Jan, travellers from Singapore, US, UK, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, France, Germany, South Korea and China.
- [Vietnam](#) has banned travellers from U.K. and South Africa It will also [limit flights](#) bringing citizens home from 10 Jan until the end of the Chinese New Year

## 3. Regulatory Developments

- [Australia](#) will mandate the [pre-flight testing](#) of international travellers and flight crew and require masks on all domestic and international flights
- [Indonesia](#) The Indonesian Ulema Council (an influential business chamber) suggested the business community should be able to administer vaccine to staff and sell them to public. They also stated that the COVID-19 vaccine produced by Sinovac Biotech is deemed halal, or permissible under Islam. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has 3 million doses of the vaccine CoronaVac.
- [Sri Lanka](#)'s Health Ministry has approved a comprehensive set of guidelines to resume international tourism in a COVID-19 safe environment from 23 January in order to formally reopen borders to welcome the first batch of international tourists and commercial flights post-COVID. The new guidelines include no minimum stay, mandatory Covid-19 insurance cover for one-month worth at least Rs. 5 million and the certified hotels being allowed to host guests from multiple flights.

#### 4. Industry Developments

- Chief Executive Officer and Director General of the International Air Transport Association ([IATA](#)) Alexandre de Juniac lamented that international and domestic air travel numbers have flattened out through November last year due to the absence of a balanced approach to tackling cross-border travel, and the outlook for the first quarter of this year looks dismal. He said that governments had largely ignored the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce recommendations outlining safe travel protocols.
- [Brisbane Airport](#) has received international endorsement for its COVID-19-safe practices, with Airports Council International (ACI) awarding it airport health accreditation (AHA).

## 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	
New Zealand	Australia (pending implementation details of the trans-Tasman bubble)
Singapore	Brunei, China (from specific provinces), Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea
South Korea	Singapore

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

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 for travellers to serve a mandatory quarantine and a controlled itinerary.**

Countries	
Singapore	Hong Kong (Delayed Until Further Notice)
New Zealand	Cook Islands (one-way bubble from Cook Islands to New Zealand), Australia (trans-Tasman bubble planned for Q1 2021, provided there are no major covid-19 outbreaks)

## 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, Brunei, China (applies only to travellers from Chongqing, Guangdong, Jiangsu, Shanghai, Tianjin and Zhejiang), New Zealand, Taiwan and Vietnam.

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

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

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