Balancing the need to reopen the country and keep people safe

Experts weigh in as S'pore takes steps to reopen borders in a safe, controlled way

Clara Cheng

To stop Covid-19 from entering the country, Singapore has had to step up its defences for the last three months. It has gradually relaxed its lockdown measures over the past two months, but has set up a series of strict border controls to prevent the disease from creeping into the community.

Under the existing rules, foreigners cannot enter the country. They have to be invited to Singapore, which means that the migrant workers have to be approved by the relevant authorities.

A BALANCING ACT

The risk from imported cases is not new, but in fact, border controls have always been a cornerstone of S'pore's defence strategy, experts told The Straits Times.

But it is a challenge now to re-open in a safe and controlled way, said Professor Tang, head of the National University Health System's Department of Infectious Diseases.

The government is trying to balance the risk of importing cases with the desire to maintain a stable economy and stop the disease from spreading in the city-state.

With the careful relaxation of travel restrictions and more green lanes allowing essential and business travel, Singapore is keeping a close eye on imported cases and making sure they do not look too into the different arrangements.

Clara Cheng looks at the different arrangements:

Countries which have reopened their borders to Singapore

1. Indonesia

- Both countries agreed to share travel information on incoming passengers and to put contact tracing measures in place to ensure efficient and seamless flow of passengers.

2. Thailand

- Both countries agreed to ease travel restrictions for business travelers and to preserve travel connectivity through selected Trusted Travel Partner (TTP) schemes.

Countries which have allowed Singaporean travelers

1. Brunei and New Zealand

- Both countries agreed to allow travel between them, provided that travelers meet certain criteria such as completing a 14-day quarantine period, being fully vaccinated, and having a negative Covid-19 test result.

2. Switzerland

- Both countries agreed to allow travel between them, provided that travelers meet certain criteria such as completing a 14-day quarantine period, being fully vaccinated, and having a negative Covid-19 test result.

Countries which have placed restrictions on Singaporean travelers

1. Japan

- Both countries agreed to place a ban on flights from Singapore to Japan due to the increase in Covid-19 cases in Singapore.

2. China

- Both countries agreed to place a ban on flights from Singapore to China due to the increase in Covid-19 cases in Singapore.

Countries which have allowed Singaporean travelers

1. Brunei

- Both countries agreed to allow travel between them, provided that travelers meet certain criteria such as completing a 14-day quarantine period, being fully vaccinated, and having a negative Covid-19 test result.

2. Switzerland

- Both countries agreed to allow travel between them, provided that travelers meet certain criteria such as completing a 14-day quarantine period, being fully vaccinated, and having a negative Covid-19 test result.

Source: The Straits Times © Singapore Press Holdings Ltd. Permission required for reproduction