

**TRANSCRIPT OF OPENING REMARKS BY MR GABRIEL LIM
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AT MEDIA BRIEFING FOR REOPENING OF INTERNATIONAL BORDERS
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COVID-19 is not just a health crisis, but also an economic and societal challenge as well. We see globally, countries doing their best not just to save lives, but also protect livelihoods, and protect the well-being of their people.

2 In terms of saving lives, we have made encouraging progress in Singapore to manage the spread of the virus. We have kept the fatality rate relatively low. But of course, every loss of life is one too many. I would like to convey our deep appreciation to the healthcare professionals fighting valiantly on the frontline, who have done an amazing job.

3 The progress we have made over the last two months during the Circuit Breaker period has given us confidence to open up. We are now in Phase 1 of the re-opening and we have started to see more people going about their daily activities, returning to work and so on.

4 Phase 1 of the re-opening is absolutely important in terms of protecting our domestic economy and the livelihoods of Singaporeans. For Singapore in particular, we have to think very carefully about opening up. We have an intricate link to the global economy. While I will not go through the full list of statistics, many of you would know that our trade is three times of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Singapore's survival depends on us remaining connected to the world, as a hub for investment, trade and talent. It has always been and will continue to be our mode for survival for a long time to come.

5 We have always maintained openness for trade to continue. Goods continue to flow from Singapore and through Singapore, as a trans-shipment hub. We have taken the lead to get countries to collaborate and maintain supply chain connectivity under the *Joint Ministerial Statement Affirming Commitment to Ensuring Supply Chain Connectivity amidst the COVID-19 Situation*. We have supported similar measures at multi-lateral platforms, such as the World Trade Organization and at the G20. Singapore has never imposed an export ban on products manufactured on our shores. We have continued to uphold our commitment to international customers and trading community as a manufacturing hub.

6 Having retained and preserved our supply chain, the next step to take would be to restore some of our people flows between countries. This is the broad context or driver for our Reciprocal Green Lane (RGL) arrangements with other countries and regions. We will be launching the RGL with China first, while we remain in negotiation with a number of other countries and regions to establish similar RGL arrangements. We will start with essential travels for official and business reasons.

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7 We are starting with China, who is an important and long-standing partner. China is one of our biggest trading partners. We are also one of the largest sources of foreign investment in China. There are thousands of people working in each other's economy. There are even more people who travel for official and business reasons between the two countries. This is the important reason why we have put in place the RGL arrangement with China.

8 I think Wee Kiong has already mentioned the reciprocal arrangements – essentially testing protocol, a tracking protocol with TraceTogether as well as some form of a controlled itinerary and sponsorship by the host entities.

9 Specifically, there are two groups of travellers. One comprises travellers who are coming into Singapore from China and let's call this Category A for now – inbound travellers. The other is the group of travellers going from Singapore into China – these are outbound travellers (Category B).

10 For Category A travellers, they will reach out to a government agency or business entity in Singapore as their sponsor, and the sponsor will then apply for a SafeTravel Pass on behalf of the traveller. With the approval, they will then proceed to apply for a visa, unless they do not need to, in which case the SafeTravel Pass approval will be enough. Thereafter, in preparation for their departure from China, they will have to monitor their health and take a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test within 48 hours before their departure from China and make sure that the test results are clear. When they land in Singapore, they will take another test in Singapore.

11 If both tests are clear, they can proceed with the approved itinerary while in Singapore. The sponsoring agency or organisation will see to it that they are managing their movements, as well as making the transportation arrangements and so on. All of the visitors in Singapore will need to use TraceTogether. Those are, broadly, the protocols for category A travellers. More details will be released shortly.

12 For Category B travellers, it will broadly be the same process, but in reverse. In this case, they will have to get a letter from the Chinese sponsor (i.e. government agency or business entity). They are required to apply to the Chinese embassy for a visa, if necessary. They will have to take a PCR test 48 hours before the flight, and be cleared before they can board. When they land in China, they will also be subject to another test. Likewise, for the period they are in China, they will be looked after by the sponsoring agencies or organisation to ensure that their itinerary is as per filed. They will also have to use China's Health QR Code system.

13 These are the broad strokes of the protocols in place, as Wee Kiong mentioned, to allow travel to resume but in a safe way, and to minimise risk of transmission of viruses into the hosting community. More details will be shared subsequently. More importantly, for those who are keen to apply for RGL, we will make things very clear for them when we open up for applications.

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14 I want to end off by saying that these protocols are what we have in place today. We will continue to refine them along the way as the situation evolves and as we get more experience operationalising the RGL arrangements. Having said that, it's important that we start off and this first RGL arrangement with China is a first step in Singapore's broader reopening to the international community and economy as well.

15 Thank you very much.