

## **Malaysia-Singapore reopen under PCA, RGL plans**

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MALAYSIA'S Minister of Foreign Affairs, Datuk Seri Hishamuddin Tun Hussein and his Singaporean counterpart, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, in a joint statement on Tuesday announced that Malaysia and Singapore will be implementing the Reciprocal Green Lane (RGL) and Periodic Commuting Arrangement (PCA) to allow for cross border travel for essential businesses or official travellers between the two countries by 10 August 2020.

The move will also allow for citizens from both countries who hold long term immigration passes for businesses and work purposes to enter and stay for at least three consecutive months in their country of work before returning to their home country for a short-term leave. They may reenter after the leave period for at least another three consecutive months.

The governments of Malaysia and Singapore have agreed to publish the complete guideline on the process and implementation of the RGL and PCA 10 days prior to the border reopening.

Why should we care?

The border between the two countries was closed since the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO) on 18 March.

However, talks on relaxing cross border travel have been underway for the past months, citing reasons such as the loss of jobs and income due to the decrease in economic activities between the two nations.

Singapore is Malaysia's top trading partners with exports and imports with Singapore amounting to US\$34.47 Billion and US\$25.47 between the year 2014 and 2018.

Singapore also relies on much of Malaysia's workforce with approximately 415,000 people, mainly Malaysians residing in Johor, crossing the land checkpoints on a daily basis for work or education purposes.

During the implementation of Malaysia's MCO and Singapore's circuit breaker, thousands of workers were either relieved of their jobs or were left in a state of limbo, unable to return to Singapore.

Following talks between Johor and Singapore governments with several employers from the island republic, State Investment, Entrepreneur Development, Cooperative and Human Resource Committee chairman Mohd Izhar Ahmad said that about 75 per cent of Malaysians will be accepted back (for employment) once the border reopens.

As the number of COVID-19 cases gradually decreases for both countries, the border reopening signals the government's effort to expand cross-border travel across countries categorised as COVID-19 green zones such as Brunei, New Zealand, Japan, Australia and South Korea.

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