

# Speech by STL at Saudi Air Connectivity Program and Cathay Pacific Route Launch Signing Ceremony (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung, at the Saudi Air Connectivity Program and Cathay Pacific Route Launch Signing Ceremony today (June 6):

Mr Hamad Aljebreen (Consul General of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Hong Kong), Mr Majid Khan (Chief Executive Officer of Saudi Air Connectivity Program), Mr Ronald Lam (Chief Executive Officer of Cathay Group), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

As-Salaamu Alaykum (Peace be upon you). It gives me great pleasure to be here today and witness the signing of the Marketing Cooperation Agreement between Cathay Pacific (CX) and the Saudi Air Connectivity Program.

The co-operation between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia has never been stronger, and it was further strengthened by our Chief Executive's visit to Saudi Arabia last year. Since then, we have witnessed soaring collaboration between the two places in various fields, spanning from investment promotion to dispute avoidance and resolution. Such a collaboration presents abundant opportunities for both business and tourism. On one hand, Hong Kong stands as a gateway to the Mainland China market, particularly the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which houses a population of around 86 million. On the other, Saudi Arabia stands at the heart of the Islamic world, embodying a rich tapestry of tradition and modernity. Bolstering connectivity, therefore, brings new prospects for not only our two places, but also for the broader global landscape.

Saudi Arabia has been a long-standing and close aviation partner to Hong Kong. The Air Services Agreement between us was signed almost two decades ago. Over the years, our aviation ties have grown stronger, witnessing remarkable developments in air services, especially in the area of all-cargo operations. The robust growth and success of our all cargo services have been instrumental in enhancing trade and connectivity between our two regions.

But let's not forget the focus of today, the signing of the Marketing Cooperation Agreement, which marks a significant milestone for the already prospering aviation partnership between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. I am very pleased to learn that the Agreement paves way for the commencement of CX's non-stop flights to Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia, later this year. The re-establishment of passenger air services since 2017 signifies our unwavering commitment to providing seamless travel experiences for passengers between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. It also shows our trust, our confidence and our deep belief in the vast potential for further co-operation between

the two places. There are still a lot of possibilities to pursue in our relationship, for example in tourism, in trade and many other areas, something I can only eagerly anticipate.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to CX, our flagship carrier, for their unfaltering support to the Government's policies and for considering Hong Kong's strategic development needs in their network planning. With CX's forthcoming relaunch of services, we also ardently look forward to the establishment of passenger connectivity between our regions by airlines of Saudi Arabia in the near future.

As many of you may know, Hong Kong International Airport is being developed into a Three-Runway System, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The expanded airport will be able to handle 120 million passengers and 10 million tonnes of cargo per year from 2035 onwards. We will no longer experience the capacity constraints that have limited the expansion of air services in the past. By leveraging the opportunities brought by the Three-Runway System and our country's support of the "Air Silk Road", we are poised to open up a new aviation hinterland to support the international aviation hub development of Hong Kong.

In line with this vision, the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) Government is committed to strengthening aviation services on current major routes and routes along the Belt and Road with potential. Saudi Arabia sits at the crossroad between East and West, holding with it unquestionably strong strategic importance. Following CX's initiative to commence services to Riyadh, we will be able to expand Hong Kong's aviation network and enhance air connectivity between us and the Middle East, which further consolidates Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub.

I wish to emphasise that our commitment does not end here. We welcome further collaboration with Saudi Arabia to establish even more flight connections between the two places in the future. In addition, we encourage both sides to continue our promotional efforts to attract more tourism and business activities between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, capitalising on the established air links.

Thank you.

