

Key Messages for foreign audiences

1. The Singapore Government has taken strong measures against the SARS problem, stronger than most other countries in the region, and over and above the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). A Ministerial Committee, supported by an Executive Group of Permanent Secretaries from all key Ministries, has taken comprehensive measures to manage the SARS situation and its impact on society and the economy.
2. Through the robust measures taken by the Government, the impact of SARS on the lives of Singaporeans has been limited. Singapore has earned high marks for anti-SARS efforts such as the designation of Tan Tock Seng as the SARS hospital, the decision to quarantine at home those in close contact with SARS cases and the no-visitor rule at public hospitals. As a result, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has removed its travel advisory on Singapore. The American, British, European, Canadian and Japanese chambers of commerce in Singapore have also expressed their confidence in Singapore's measures to isolate and contain SARS.
3. Our borders remain open and we welcome visitors, tourists, businessmen and students. Singapore has measures to ensure SARS is not "imported" nor "exported". For instance, thermal screening of all incoming and outgoing air passengers and crew is carried out. All incoming social visitors at land checkpoints are also required to submit health declaration cards and undergo temperature checks.
4. Precautions have also been taken to enable people to continue to enter Singapore for work and study. New employment pass, work permit and student pass holders from SARS-affected countries continue to be welcomed, but will be placed on a 10-day quarantine on arrival. This is to minimise the possibility of transmission in the workplace, the living quarters of foreign employees or educational establishments.
5. Singapore investigates every foreign case and shares information with the countries and all concerned, including the media. Contact tracing is undertaken diligently and findings are reported to WHO. Thus far, there are no definitive indications that any foreign nationals have contracted SARS while in Singapore notwithstanding such claims in the foreign media.
6. Concerted steps have been taken to revitalise businesses and ensure the continuity of their operations. The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has launched "Step Out! Singapore" to stimulate tourism and encourage Singaporeans to participate in public life. The Government has also assisted many companies in activating their business continuity plans.

7. In addition, STB has instituted the “Cool Singapore” programme, which certifies hotels and restaurants for hygiene and other precautionary measures against SARS, such as temperature taking for all staff. As a result, customers have been returning to hotels, restaurants and shopping centres. Likewise, the National Environment Agency of Singapore has launched the “Singapore’s OK” campaign to encourage the people, private and public sectors to achieve a high standard of environmental hygiene and good public health.
8. The Government has taken pains to maintain open and honest communication with all sectors of the population, including expatriates. Details on SARS and all new infections have been made public daily through press conferences chaired by the Minister for Health and also regular press releases. All key stakeholder groups are informed and educated on their social responsibility in containing the spread of SARS.
9. The war against SARS will not be over until other SARS-hit countries in the immediate region are also free of the bug. To that end, Asean leaders have recently hammered out a common strategy to combat SARS, putting in place a series of co-ordinated measures to keep their borders open while ensuring that the virus will be contained. Asean leaders have pledged to set up a network to share information on SARS and have standardised health declaration cards and temperature checks for air passengers
10. We will continue to be vigilant and allocate all the resources needed to remain on top of the situation by continuing to do things better. While SARS has inflicted some social and economic damage, we are making clear inroads to recovery because prompt and decisive actions are being taken, not just within Singapore, but in co-operation with our neighbours.