

Penang, the next destination for Malaysia-Singapore VTL-Air?

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(<https://www.buletinmutiara.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PIA-Penang-Airport00013.jpg>)

PENANG Tourism and Creative Economy Committee chairman Yeoh Soon Hin is working on making Penang the next destination for Malaysia-Singapore Vaccinated Travel Lane by air (VTL-Air).

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, in a virtual dialogue today, said he believed that Penang would be the second destination (after Kuala Lumpur International Airport) to implement the Malaysia-Singapore VTL-Air programme.

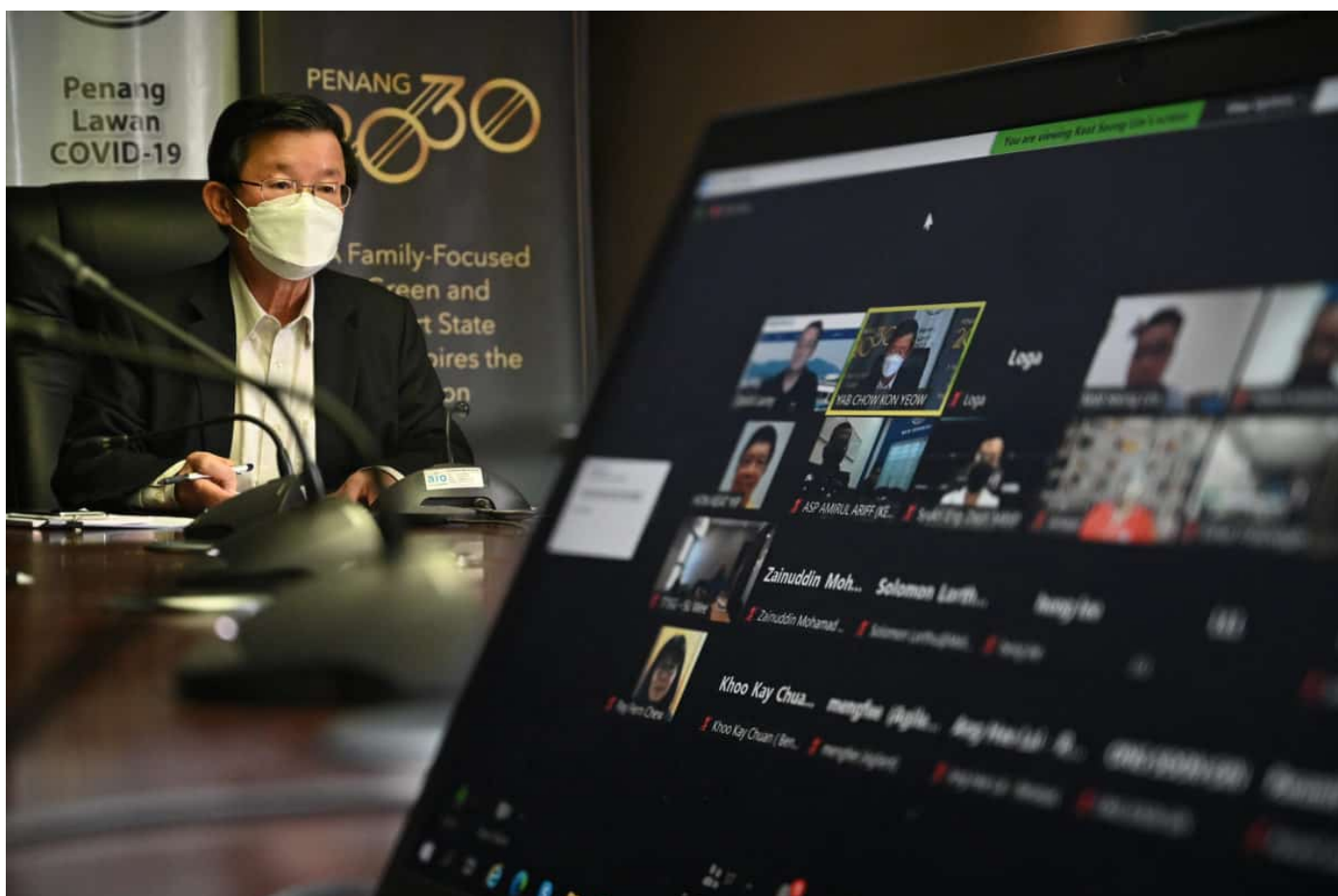
KLIA implemented the Malaysia-Singapore VTL-Air on Nov 29, allowing quarantine-free travel for fully vaccinated individuals.

“We are in contact with the national government on plans to make Penang the next destination for VTL-Air between Singapore and Malaysia. The state Tourism and Creative Economy Committee chairman is working on the matter.

“This morning, I met an investor from Singapore who had to travel to Kuala Lumpur first, before being able to come to Penang.

“This is the best that we can do during this interim period. Anyone from Singapore or vice-versa, will have to travel through Kuala Lumpur.

“We hope that the wait will not be too long, and that Penang will soon be the next destination to implement the VTL-Air programme,” he said during a virtual dialogue with The Free Industrial Zone, Penang, Companies’ Association (Frepenca) members.



Chow having a virtual dialogue with Frepenca members.

Chow said the while other countries have taken the necessary decision to allow cross border travel, Malaysia is slow in this aspect.

“However, the matter is being highlighted on every occasion.

“At the moment, the concern over the new Covid-19 variant is there and we hope that things can stabilise soon.

“In terms of Covid-19 vaccination, Malaysia has achieved one of the highest (percentage) among many countries in the region. That would make us a country that should consider earlier reopening of borders.

“I have often heard discussions about the shortening of quarantine period and the proposal to reopen borders at the national meetings,” he said.

On the availability of industrial land, InvestPenang chief executive officer Datuk Loo Lee Lian said there were not much land left at the Batu Kawan Industrial Park (BKIP), while there were some lands available at the Penang Science Park.

“Penang Development Corporation (PDC) is getting the new industrial sites – Batu Kawan Industrial Park 2 (BKIP 2) and Batu Kawan Industrial Park 3 (BKIP 3) – ready,” she said.

Chow said that PDC has started on BKIP 2 (the south of BKIP).

“PDC is getting the Phase One ready, which is about 100 to 200 acres of land. The eventual size of BKIP 2 is about 2,000 acres. It will entail earthwork and installation of basic infrastructure to get the land ready before the investors can move in.

“Meanwhile, BKIP 3 (the east of BKIP) will only be ready by late 2023 or early 2024,” he said.

To address the ‘gap’ in the availability of industrial land in Penang, Chow said the state government had received proposals from private landowners.

"A landowner will be submitting the development order application early next year. It will involve some 800 acres of land in Bertam. The land is already zoned as industrial land.

"The industrial land in Bertam is good as infrastructure readiness is there. It is near the highway, and water and sewerage systems are in place. The land could be ready in six to nine months.

"Such a diversion away from Batu Kawan is good," he said.

Chow also said that another private industrial landowner had also approached the state.

"The industrial land, which is a thousand over acres, is in Tasek Gelugor. InvestPenang and PDC are finding ways to collaborate with the landowner to meet the needs of the investors. Discussions are currently ongoing," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Chow said that the electrical and electronics (E&E) industry remained the state's key pillar.

He also said that Penang has gained increasing traction from global Tier-1 medical device players.

"Penang has garnered RM4.5 billion of investment from the scientific and measuring equipment (including medical device) industry from 2019 to 2020.

"I am also proud that the state continues to thrive as a regional machinery and equipment (M&E) hub. Despite the pandemic, Penang secured a record RM5.7 billion or 81% of the country's total direct investment inflows in M&E in 2020," he added.

Chow lauded the industry players in Penang.

"Penang's 50-year industrialisation journey is definitely a significant milestone. It would not have been possible without the contributions from our industry players," he said.

Among those present were Frepenca president Dr David Lacey, vice-president Allen Tan, and committee members Datuk Heng Huck Lee and Elmar Friesnegger.

Story by Christopher Tan

Pix by Ahmad Adul Muhamad

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