

***For Immediate Reporting***

## **SINGAPORE AND AUSTRALIA LAUNCH NEGOTIATIONS ON DIGITAL ECONOMY AGREEMENT**

1. Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham jointly announced the launch of negotiations on a new Singapore-Australia Digital Economy Agreement (DEA) today, on the sidelines of the 9<sup>th</sup> Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand.
2. Mr Chan said, “Digital connectivity presents many opportunities for companies to transcend their physical boundaries and tap into the wider global market. Singapore and Australia are like-minded partners that believe in the importance of establishing necessary infrastructure and frameworks to promote more seamless digital trade and data flows. The Singapore-Australia DEA will allow us to work more closely together to push the frontiers of digital connectivity.”
3. The Singapore-Australia DEA, which is an inter-agency effort led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Communications and Information, and the Infocomm Media Development Authority, aims to deepen bilateral collaboration in the digital economy and enhance digital connectivity.
4. Through the DEA and its pilot initiatives, Singapore and Australia aim to facilitate end-to-end digital trade and business, covering digital identities, connection of customs single window systems, e-invoicing and e-payments. Both countries will also explore deepening cooperation in areas such as data protection and cross-border data flows, fintech, as well as artificial intelligence governance frameworks.

### **Annex A: Photo and Caption**

### **Annex B: Joint Singapore-Australia press release on the Singapore-Australia Digital Economy Agreement**

**Jointly issued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of  
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Authority**

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**Annex A: Photo and Caption**



Caption: Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham announced the launch of negotiations of the Singapore-Australia Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) on the sidelines of the 9<sup>th</sup> RCEP Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, 12 October 2019.

**Annex B: Joint Singapore-Australia press release on the Singapore-Australia Digital Economy Agreement**



**SENATOR THE HON SIMON  
BIRMINGHAM**  
Minister for Trade, Tourism and  
Investment



**MR CHAN CHUNG SING**  
Minister for Trade and Industry

**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

**Australia and Singapore scope landmark digital economy agreement**

Australia and Singapore are continuing to lead the way on digital trade through a landmark agreement that will harness digital transformation and technology to expand trade and economic ties in our region.

Following discussions in June in Singapore between Prime Ministers Scott Morrison and Lee Hsien Loong, work on a landmark Australia-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement commenced, with the aim to deepen the bilateral economic relationship, promote greater connectivity and provide ambitious standards for the region's digital economy.

Today, Trade Ministers Simon Birmingham and Chan Chun Sing agreed on the scope of the Agreement, which covers a broad range of new areas of bilateral cooperation, including digital trade facilitation, e-invoicing, e-payments, FinTech, digital identity and artificial intelligence.

Australia and Singapore will also explore the role of data in the digital economy and work together to foster trust, promote a safe online environment and improve personal data protection.

"Southeast Asia's digital economy is growing rapidly. Connectivity and internet use across the region is increasing with a rising number of businesses and consumers now engaged in cross-border digital commerce," Minister Birmingham said.

"Half of Australian businesses are already engaged in the digital economy in some way, and this number is growing exponentially. This agreement will ultimately deliver practical improvements that lower the costs and increase the efficiency of doing business.

"This Agreement will expand the scope of our economic engagement and provide new opportunities for businesses and consumers to benefit from the

digital economy, modernising our economic relationship with Singapore.

“Building on the Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, it will also expand on both countries’ commitments under the Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement.

“It will provide support to the global trading system at a time of regional economic uncertainty. By developing digital trade rules and standards that build trust and confidence, and by deepening cooperation, Australia and Singapore can set ambitious benchmarks for others in the region.”

Minister Chan said, “Trade has been and continues to be the bedrock of the Singapore economy. The Singapore-Australia Digital Economy Agreement will enhance digital trade opportunities for our companies, with Australia and the broader region.

“With the digital economy of Southeast Asia expected to triple by 2025, this Agreement will lay the groundwork for bilateral digital economy cooperation geared towards enabling our companies to tap on this regional growth.

“Through high-standard digital trade rules and pilot initiatives, we will push the frontiers of digital trade and digital connectivity. This Agreement will allow us to build on what we have achieved under the Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement. It will also add another new dimension to enrich our multi-faceted collaboration under the bilateral Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

“The Agreement will complement both Australia’s and Singapore’s networks of free trade agreements, as well as our efforts as co-convenor of the World Trade Organization Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce to develop international digital trade rules.”

Formal negotiations will begin shortly and both countries are working to finalise this agreement by early next year.

This initiative will build on the leading role of Australia and Singapore in negotiating new rules for digital trade in the World Trade Organization Joint Statement Initiative on e-commerce negotiations.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade welcomes public submissions on the Digital Economy Agreement, which can be made [here](#).

*Authorised by Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, South Australia and Singapore’s Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing*