

DH to further strengthen health quarantine arrangements on inbound travellers from overseas

Following the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government's announcement today (March 10) on the Red Outbound Travel Alert issued on the whole of Italy, France (Bourgogne-Franche-Comte and Grand Est), Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia), Japan (Hokkaido) and Spain (La Rioja, Madrid and Pais Vasco) in response to the latest situations of COVID-19, the Department of Health (DH) will also strengthen health quarantine arrangements on inbound travellers arriving from these countries/regions.

Starting from 0.00am on March 14, the DH's Port Health Division officers will issue quarantine orders under the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) to people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to France (Bourgogne-Franche-Comte and Grand Est), Germany (North Rhine-Westphalia), Japan (Hokkaido) and Spain (La Rioja, Madrid and Pais Vasco) in the past 14 days, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents. They will be arranged to stay in a quarantine centre for quarantine. The arrangement also extends on the same day to people arriving from the whole of Italy to replace the existing three areas of Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto regions in Italy.

Separately, the quarantine measures announced earlier for those who have been to Korea and Iran in the past 14 days remain unchanged.

A spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) said that the Government has been conducting detailed assessments for formulating port health measures in response to the occurrence of outbreaks in countries or areas outside Hong Kong. The assessment will take into account factors such as the number, distribution and rate of increase of infected persons, measures put in place for surveillance and control of the outbreak, and the frequency of visits by Hong Kong residents. The Government will review and adjust the measures in view of the developments.

The CHP will continually update the list of places with active community transmissions of COVID-19 under the reporting criteria for suspected cases to include the above countries/areas. Medical practitioners are requested to report to the CHP any individual fulfilling the following for further investigation:

- Presented with fever or acute respiratory illness or pneumonia; and
- Either one of the following conditions within 14 days before the onset of symptom(s):
 1. With travel history to a place with active community transmission of COVID-19; or
 2. Had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19.

The CHP reminded members of the public that a number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 were recorded in Hong Kong recently related to a tour group to India, indicating the possibility of community transmission there. Meanwhile, as the transmission of the COVID-19 virus has been increasing around the world, members of the public are advised to consider delaying all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the Government has drawn up corresponding port health and quarantine measures in response to the health risk of individual countries/areas. Before travelling outside Hong Kong, members of the public should be aware of the potential health risk and applicable quarantine arrangements upon returning to Hong Kong.

If it is unavoidable to travel to countries/areas outside Hong Kong, the public should avoid close contact with persons with fever or respiratory symptoms during travel and wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. Furthermore, the public should observe personal and environmental hygiene and take preventive measures, in particular, avoid touching animals (including game) poultry/birds or their droppings; avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms; and do not consume game meat or patronise food premises where game meat is served.