

Government announces further tightening of testing and isolation arrangement for consular and diplomatic officers exempted from compulsory quarantine

The Government today (November 17) announced that the testing and isolation arrangements for consular and diplomatic officers who are exempted from quarantine requirement upon arriving Hong Kong will be tightened with effect from tomorrow (November 18).

A Government spokesman pointed out that in view of the development and severity of the global epidemic situation, based on the prevention and risk assessment, the Government decided to tighten the epidemic control measures on inbound travellers comprehensively. With effect from November 18 (Wednesday), the Government will tighten the testing and isolation arrangement for consular and diplomatic officers who are exempted from quarantine arrangement upon arriving Hong Kong, particularly those who have visited very high risk places (i.e. the specified very high-risk places gazetted under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap.599H)), with details as follows:

Consular and diplomatic officers who have visited very high risk places during the 14 days prior to arrival in Hong Kong:

- They must possess a negative result of SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test done at an ISO15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located with the specimen collected within 48 hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong;
- They must take a post-arrival SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test at the Department of Health's (DH) Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) and wait for the results there or any other location as designated by DH upon arrival at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA);
- Except Consul Generals or representatives in HKSAR at equivalent level, all other consular and diplomatic officers must be subject to self-isolation for 14 days at an accommodation arranged by respective organisations;
- Specimen bottles will be distributed to the consular and diplomatic officers upon arrival. They must collect and return their deep throat saliva sample at Day-12 upon their arrival in accordance with the instructions for SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test again; and
- Respective organisations must arrange point-to-point transportation for the consular and diplomatic officers. The use of public transport is prohibited.

Consular and diplomatic officers who have not visited very high risk places

during the 14-day prior to arrival in Hong Kong:

- If they possess a negative result of SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test done at an ISO15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located with the specimen collected within 48 hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong, they are required to take a post-arrival SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test at the DH's TSCC before leaving HKIA;
- If they do not possess a negative result of SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test done at an ISO15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located with the specimen collected within 48 hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong, they must take a post-arrival SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test at the DH's TSCC and wait for the results there or any other location as designated by DH upon arrival at HKIA;
- Specimen bottles will be distributed to the consular and diplomatic officers upon arrival. They must collect and return their deep throat saliva sample at Day-12 upon their arrival in accordance with the instructions for SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test again; and
- Respective organisations must arrange point-to-point transportation for the consular and diplomatic officers. The use of public transport is prohibited.

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The spokesman said, "The exemption status and the itineraries of the consular and diplomatic officers carrying out governmental duties are determined by their official capacity and relevant official duties with a view to safeguarding normal operation of the governments. Nevertheless, we consider there is a need to tighten respective exemption arrangement to strengthen the prevention of imported cases as well as avoiding the respective exempted persons' contact with the local community during the exemption period, so as to achieve the strategic goal to 'Controlling the epidemic with precision'."

The spokesman added, "The testing and quarantine arrangement imposed by the Government on incoming passengers was made on the basis of public health risk assessment and has been adjusting rapidly in response to the latest epidemic situation and experts' views. The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation around the world, and review the quarantine and testing arrangements for all inbound travellers (including exempted persons) entering Hong Kong."