

Government clarifies quarantine arrangement for overseas arrivals

The Government has all along been adopting stringent border control measures with a science-based approach, including multiple tests prior to boarding flights, on arrival, during and after the quarantine periods. These measures are adjusted when appropriate with a view to building an anti-epidemic barrier to prevent the importation of cases. Regarding comments referring the latest compulsory quarantine arrangements for overseas arrivals at Hong Kong as a relaxation, a Government spokesman pointed out that such remarks were made out of misunderstanding.

The spokesman said that the Government announced on August 2 the strengthening of border control measures to build an anti-epidemic barrier. The Group A specified places (High-risk) effective from August 9 are re-organised from the original Group A1 and Group A2 specified places. None of these places was adjusted downward as a Group B specified place under the latest arrangements, thus no extremely high-risk or very high-risk places were made medium-risk places. Under the latest arrangements, only fully vaccinated Hong Kong residents with a recognised vaccination record and their accompanied children aged below 12 are allowed to board flights for Hong Kong. They are subject to the "test-and-hold" arrangement at the airport upon arrival at Hong Kong. Only if their test results are negative, could they then proceed to a designated quarantine hotel to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days, during which they need to undergo four tests. They are also required to undergo compulsory testing in a Community Testing Centre on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong.

As for the medium-risk Group B specified places under the latest arrangement, they comprise the original Group B and Group C specified places, where the compulsory quarantine and testing requirements remain unchanged (i.e. 21 days of compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels for non-vaccinated persons, a shortened quarantine period of 14 days for those with a vaccination record, and a further shortened period of seven days for those who also have a positive result proof of an antibody test). There is no relaxation whatsoever on quarantine arrangements for persons arriving from these places. The latest arrangement further strengthened relevant boarding and testing arrangements. Now all persons arriving from overseas places must comply with the requirement of a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based nucleic acid test conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of boarding. Additional compulsory tests (on the ninth, 12th, 16th and 19th days) are also required for vaccinated persons after the quarantine period.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation of different places, and will consider a basket of factors under the risk-based principle, including public health considerations (such as epidemic situation in particular places, testing rate, vaccination rate, volume of travellers and actual imported cases, etc), as well as other local socio-

economic factors to adjust the boarding, quarantine and testing requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from relevant places based on risk levels as the situation warrants.