

Government extends place-specific flight suspension mechanism and tightens boarding and quarantine requirements for places with Omicron cases detected

The Government announced today (January 14) that the place-specific flight suspension mechanism for Australia, Canada, France, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States of America will be extended for 14 days to February 4. The Government will also specify Armenia, Bonaire, Guatemala and New Caledonia as Group A specified places from 0.00am on January 17 to tighten the boarding and quarantine requirements for relevant inbound travellers.

Place-specific flight suspension mechanism for eight places

In view of the continuously worsening global epidemic situation due to the Omicron variant, the Government earlier invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to implement the place-specific flight suspension mechanism from January 8 (Hong Kong time) for Australia, Canada, France, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. All passenger flights from these eight places will be prohibited from landing in Hong Kong, and at the same time, persons who have stayed in these places for more than two hours within 21 days will be restricted from boarding passenger flights for Hong Kong, so as to stop persons from the relevant places from travelling to Hong Kong via transit. The relevant measure was to be maintained for 14 days up to January 21. Considering that the local epidemic situation has not yet stabilised and enhanced measures are required to suppress the risks of local transmission, while the epidemic situation in relevant places continue to be severe, resuming the flights would pose great importation risks to Hong Kong. The Government has therefore decided that there is a need to extend the relevant measure for another 14 days (that is, from 0.00am on January 22 (Hong Kong time) to February 4), in order to further reduce the number of persons arriving at Hong Kong from overseas high risk places, so as to intercept the importation of cases.

The Government will review in due course whether the place-specific flight suspension mechanism should be lifted or continued by taking into account the latest global and local epidemic developments.

A Government spokesman said, "We understand that the place-specific flight suspension mechanism is an extremely stringent emergency measure, and all along large numbers of Hong Kong residents have been returning to the city from these eight places, so the relevant measure will inevitably affect

their return journeys. However, we must act decisively to lower the risk to the local epidemic situation so as to quickly quell the epidemic situation, such that it would not be necessary to maintain the most stringent prevention and control measures for a long time."

Tightening boarding and quarantine requirements for places with Omicron cases detected

Meanwhile, in view of the latest global developments of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, Armenia, Bonaire, Guatemala and New Caledonia will be specified as Group A specified places from 0.00am on January 17 to tighten the boarding and quarantine requirements for relevant inbound travellers.

To manage and prevent the importation risks posed by Omicron cases, the Government continues to employ the most stringent measures to guard against importation of cases. Overseas places where Omicron cases have been detected that may lead to local transmission and exportation of cases will be specified as Group A specified places. Noting that the detection of Omicron cases was confirmed in Armenia, Bonaire, Guatemala and New Caledonia, the Government will specify them as Group A specified places from 0.00am on January 17. Non-Hong Kong residents who have stayed there within 21 days will not be allowed to enter Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents can only board a flight for Hong Kong if they have been fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record. They will have to undergo compulsory quarantine in a designated quarantine hotel for 21 days upon returning to Hong Kong, with six tests to be conducted during quarantine, followed by compulsory testing in a community testing centre on the 26th day of arrival in Hong Kong.

Details on the relevant boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for respective specified places can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html.

The Government will gazette the relevant updated specifications under Cap. 599H to effect the above measures.