

Government further tightens place-specific flight suspension mechanism and suspends passenger flights from Nepal

â€‹The Government announced today (April 29) the further tightening of the criteria of place-specific flight suspension mechanism.

Under the tightened place-specific flight suspension mechanism, the Government will extend the measure to prohibit all passenger flights from India, Pakistan and the Philippines from landing in Hong Kong, and starting from 00.00am on May 1, prohibit all passenger flights from Nepal from landing in Hong Kong. Starting from the same day, Nepal will also be specified as an extremely high-risk place under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) alongside the other three places aforementioned, so as to restrict persons who have stayed in these places from boarding for Hong Kong.

The Government implemented the place-specific flight suspension mechanism on April 14. Under the mechanism, if a total of five or more passengers among all flights from the same place, regardless of airline, were confirmed by arrival tests for COVID-19 with the N501Y mutant strain within a seven-day period, the Government would invoke Cap. 599H to prohibit all passenger flights from that place from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days, and would at the same time specify that place as an extremely high-risk place under Cap. 599H to restrict persons who have stayed in that place for more than two hours from boarding passenger flights for Hong Kong for 14 days, so as to prevent persons from the relevant place from arriving at Hong Kong via transit.

In view of the continually unstable global epidemic situation, the Government will adjust the place-specific flight suspension mechanism having considered the actual operation of the mechanism. In addition to making reference to the N501Y mutant strain, other relevant virus mutation which may potentially pose similar risks to Hong Kong's public health will also be considered. A new criterion will also be introduced to run in parallel with the criteria aforementioned. If a total of 10 or more passengers were confirmed positive by any tests (including tests conducted during quarantine) with the N501Y mutant strain or relevant virus mutation within a seven-day period, the flight suspension mechanism would also be triggered. At the same time, as a measure to manage the flight resumption arrangements more cautiously under the mechanism, the Government will conduct risk assessments every two weeks for comprehensive reviews of relevant factors such as the epidemic situation of the relevant places, vaccination rate, and the prevalence of new virus variants, etc., before determining whether it was appropriate to remove the flight suspension. Due to the need to review the

epidemic situation of the place concerned, the flight suspension mechanism will not be lifted automatically.

"As a more targeted measure in stopping the importation of the virus into Hong Kong at the source, the tightened flight suspension mechanism is an essential measure in protecting Hong Kong's public health. The Government will continue to closely monitor the situation, and will further adjust the various arrangements relevant to the prevention of importation of cases as necessary," said a Government spokesman.