

Government maintains boarding restrictions for places with severe epidemic situation and compulsory quarantine arrangements

The Government announced today (March 15) that in view of the continued severe global epidemic situation of COVID-19, it will maintain the measure under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to restrict persons who have stayed in the extremely high-risk Group A specified places from boarding flights for Hong Kong, as well as the 21-day compulsory quarantine requirement under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) and Cap. 599H for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China.

A Government spokesman said, "It is necessary for the Government to protect the health of the overall community in Hong Kong by firmly guarding against the importation of the new virus variants. That said, the Government recognises that the measures in relation to Group A specified places are very stringent, and would inevitably affect the return journey of a number of Hong Kong residents there (mostly in the United Kingdom). Since late December last year, the number of newly confirmed cases in the UK, where the majority of the affected Hong Kong residents are situated, has fallen from the high of over 400 000 in a week to about 40 000 in the first week of March. We also noted that over 24 million people in the UK, or over one-third of the population, have received at least the first dose of vaccine. In view of this, the Government is exploring arrangements that could facilitate these residents' direct return to Hong Kong without compromising the public health of the local community. Details of the arrangements will be announced separately at an appropriate juncture."

The spokesman said, "The Government will continue to monitor closely the situation, including the developments of the epidemic situation both globally and locally and changes in the volume of cross-boundary passenger traffic, and will adjust the boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from other high-risk places when necessary."

For better understanding by the public of the boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements under the relevant regulations for persons that have stayed in different places outside China, the Government has categorised the relevant risk-based boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for the relevant specified places into three groups.

Any person who has stayed in the extremely high-risk Group A specified

places (i.e. Brazil, Ireland, South Africa and the United Kingdom) for more than two hours on the day of boarding or during the 21 days before that day are not allowed to board for Hong Kong.

For the very high-risk Group B specified places and the medium to high-risk Group C specified places, all persons arriving at Hong Kong (either via the airport or land boundary control points) who have stayed in places outside China on the day of arrival in Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day have to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in designated quarantine hotels. For persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in Group B specified places, they also have to present prior to boarding proof of a negative result of a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft.

Details on the grouping of specified places and their respective boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/high-risk-places.html.