

Government responds to media enquiries on revised testing and quarantine arrangements for air crew

In response to media enquiries about the revised testing and quarantine arrangements for air crew, a Government spokesman said the following today (April 29):

In view of the latest developments of the epidemic situation including the enhanced capacity in tackling the local epidemic, and considering the overall socio-economic needs, the Government recently announced a series of adjustments regarding control measures on inbound travellers with effect from May 1, including allowing non-Hong Kong residents to enter Hong Kong from overseas places and adjusting the route-specific flight suspension mechanism.

In tandem with the adjustments to the inbound control measures, the Government considers it appropriate to adjust the testing and quarantine arrangements applicable to air crew with effect from May 1. The adjustments are made on a risk-based approach and are considered necessary to safeguard public health, while being of utmost importance to Hong Kong's aviation, trade and logistics industries.

For air crew members who are spending a short layover in Hong Kong and are not entering the local community, they will be subject to a stringent closed-loop arrangement during their stay in Hong Kong. They are required to produce a negative result of a pre-departure rapid antigen test (RAT), use only a dedicated channel while within Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), take only point-to-point transport between HKIA and an airport hotel, which is designated to receive air crew under the closed-loop arrangement only. They are also required to self-isolate in the airport hotel rooms until they leave via point-to-point transport and a dedicated channel in HKIA, and depart from Hong Kong.

The Government will also adjust the testing and self-isolation requirements applicable to locally based air crew, with a view to relieving local airlines' manpower constraints and thus capacity to mount flights to and from Hong Kong. Having due regard to the fact that locally based passenger crew are subject to a stringent closed-loop arrangement when they lay over in outports, they will be subject to self-isolation in a designated quarantine hotel until obtaining a negative result of a polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid test conducted on the third day following their return to Hong Kong. For locally based cargo crew, not only are they subject to stringent closed-loop arrangement when they lay over in outports, they also have no passengers to interact with throughout their flight duties. As such, they will no longer be subject to self-isolation requirements upon their return to Hong Kong. However, they are required to undergo a "test-and-hold" arrangement at HKIA to obtain a negative result of a nucleic acid test

before leaving HKIA. Moreover, all of these locally based air crew are subject to medical surveillance until the 14th day following their arrival, during which they are required to conduct repeated nucleic acid tests. They shall also conduct daily RATs, avoid mask-off activities in public places, refrain from going to crowded places and mass gatherings, and keep a log of their activities until the seventh day following their arrival. In cases of non-compliance, the designation status of relevant air crew members will be revoked.

The adjustments will provide Hong Kong's aviation, trade and logistics industries, particularly air cargo operations between Hong Kong and the rest of the world, the much needed survival space. The Government calls for the aviation industry to work hand in hand to uphold Hong Kong's status as an international aviation hub, while remaining vigilant to guard against the virus. In particular, the Government has requested airlines to introduce robust mechanisms to ensure that their air crew members fully comply with the relevant requirements during the medical surveillance period. Airlines will be held responsible to oversee the activity logs of their air crew and conduct regular checks on such logs. In the event that airlines are found not to be exercising due diligence over their air crew's compliance, the designation status of their air crew will be revoked.

Moreover, from May 1 onwards, all air crew members deployed by local airlines for operating flights in and out of Hong Kong will have completed three doses of vaccines.

The Government attaches great importance to the international aviation hub status of Hong Kong and will continue to keep in view the local and global epidemic situation, and review and adjust the testing and quarantine arrangements for air crew as and when appropriate.