

Government strengthens testing for inbound travellers from Beijing

A Government spokesman said today (June 18) that in response to the latest COVID-19 situation in Beijing, testing has been strengthened for inbound travellers from Beijing.

In view of the latest development of the epidemic, Beijing authorities have announced the elevation of response level for public health emergency from Level 3 to Level 2 and the subsequent implementation of various prevention and control measures on social distancing and restriction of flow of people. Such measures include the resumption of closed community management and the forbidding of those with risk of infection to leave the city. In general, people are advised not to leave Beijing unless necessary. Those who need to leave Beijing must possess proof of negative testing result for COVID-19 nucleic acid test that is taken within the past seven days. As a prudent measure and arrangement under the joint efforts with the Mainland authorities in disease prevention and control, the Department of Health (DH) will enhance port health measures in disease prevention and control, and strengthen testing for relevant inbound travellers.

Under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), all persons (other than exempted persons under the Regulation) having stayed in the Mainland (including Beijing), Macao or Taiwan during the 14 days preceding arrival in Hong Kong will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation). To ensure sufficient supply of supplies and food in Hong Kong and maintain cross-boundary activities such as necessary business activities in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development, Section 4 of Cap. 599C empowers the Chief Secretary for Administration to exempt certain categories of people fulfilling certain criteria from the 14-day compulsory quarantine. The quarantine exemption arrangement is necessary. Exempted persons, such as crew members of aircrafts or people supplying goods or services for Hong Kong, have the need to frequently commute to and from Hong Kong and the Mainland. Their activities in the Mainland are under certain degree of restriction to limit interactions and they are subject to medical surveillance to safeguard their health condition. Most of the exempted persons are travelling between Hong Kong and Guangdong.

Under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), unless exempted, all asymptomatic inbound travellers arriving at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) are mandated to wait for test results at a designated location after submitting their deep throat saliva samples for testing COVID-19 at the DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at AsiaWorld-Expo. Should they be tested negative, they will be subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days at a designated place (home or other accommodation). In response to the situation in Beijing, since yesterday (June 17), the DH has been distributing specimen bottles to persons exempted

from compulsory quarantine who had travelled to Beijing 14 days prior to arrival at the HKIA. They should collect their deep throat saliva sample at home in accordance with the instructions, and deliver it to one of the collection points in the same morning while subjecting to medical surveillance at the same time.

As for land control points, those who have been to Beijing in the past 14 days must possess proof of negative testing result for COVID-19 nucleic acid test that is taken within the past seven days. Those arrivals who are not exempted persons are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 day at a designated place (home or other accommodation) while exempted persons are subject to medical surveillance upon arrival at Hong Kong. For the sake of prudence, those with travel history to Beijing 14 days prior to arrival at Hong Kong via land control points (applies to all inbound travellers including exempted persons) will also be given specimen bottles for conducting COVID-19 testing and are required to collect and submit their deep throat saliva sample according to instructions.

The DH will continue to closely monitor the latest situation of COVID-19 around the world and review the quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travellers.