

Government tightens compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in United Kingdom

â€‹The Government has gazetted the amendments to 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 the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) as well as the relevant specifications to tighten the compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in the United Kingdom (UK).

A Government spokesman said, "The global pandemic situation is getting more serious. A new virus variant with higher transmissibility is spotted in the UK and certain European countries. We have to stay vigilant for preventing the importation of cases."

"According to the guidelines of the World Health Organization, the incubation period of the virus could be as long as 14 days. Although there is currently no evidence showing that the incubation period of the new virus variant is longer, in view of the expert advice that the incubation period of virus carried by very few infected persons may be longer than the quarantine period of 14 days, as precautionary measures, the Government has amended the legislation to allow flexibility in lengthening the compulsory quarantine period for persons arriving at Hong Kong from a certain place (to a maximum of 28 days), and lengthening the period for a certain foreign place in which persons who arrive at Hong Kong have stayed before the arrival for determining the quarantine and boarding requirements (the Relevant Period) under the relevant Regulations (to a maximum of 28 days), taking into account the needs of infection control. This is to ensure that no case would slip through the net even under very exceptional cases where the incubation period of the virus is longer than 14 days."

The newly amended Regulations will provide the legal framework which allows the Secretary for Food and Health (SFH) to, having regard to the extent and pattern of the spread of the disease in a certain place and the public health risk posed to Hong Kong by persons who arrive at Hong Kong having recently stayed there, specify the periods for which different categories of persons who arrive at Hong Kong from a certain place would need to undergo compulsory quarantine, up to a maximum of 28 days. The newly amended Regulations will also allow SFH to, having regard to the above factors, specify the Relevant Period of different categories of persons who arrive at Hong Kong from a certain place, up to a maximum of 28 days.

Targeting the new virus variant with higher transmissibility recently

found in the UK, the SFH, taking into account expert advice, has exercised the power under the newly amended Regulations to make relevant specifications, which took effect from 0.00am today (December 24). Under the relevant specifications, all persons who have stayed in the UK for more than two hours on the day of boarding or during the 21 days before that day are not be allowed to board for Hong Kong; Persons arriving at Hong Kong (either via the airport or land boundary control points) who have stayed in the UK on the day of arrival at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day have to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in designated quarantine hotels.

As for persons who arrive at Hong Kong during the period of December 2 to December 23, 2020, if they have stayed in the UK and are placed under compulsory quarantine in Hong Kong (including the quarantine orders issued under Cap. 599E or Cap. 599C), they still have to undergo testing at the Community Testing Centre or the designated quarantine hotel on the 19th or 20th day following their arrival at Hong Kong, and also stay at their place of residence, private premises or the place of quarantine specified on the quarantine order according to the compulsory testing notice made under Cap. 599J by the Government.

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 tighten the compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from other high-risk places when necessary."