

Government tightens quarantine requirements for persons arriving from UK and adjusts testing requirement for boarding from high-risk places

The Government announced today (June 24) that the quarantine requirements for persons arriving from the United Kingdom (UK) will be tightened from June 28, while testing requirement for boarding flights from high-risk places will be adjusted from June 26.

Quarantine requirements for persons who have stayed in the UK

In response to the severe worsening of epidemic situation in the UK at the end of last year, Hong Kong specified the UK as an extremely high-risk place at the end of December last year and restricted people who had stayed in the UK from travelling to Hong Kong. Subsequently, as the UK adopted a series of anti-epidemic measures and large-scale vaccination, their local epidemic situation had greatly improved after reaching its peak in January this year. Taking into account the continued easing of the epidemic situation in the UK earlier, the Government gradually relaxed the restrictions in April and May on people who had stayed in the UK, including allowing Hong Kong residents situated in the UK to return to Hong Kong via designated flights in April, announcing on May 4 the lowering of the specification of the UK to a very high-risk Group A2 specified place from May 7 onwards, and announcing on May 31 the lowering of the specification of the UK to a high-risk Group B specified place from June 4 onwards.

However, in view of the recent rebound of the epidemic situation in the UK and the widespread of Delta variant virus strain there, coupled with a number of cases with L452R mutant virus strains detected by tests from people arriving from the UK at the "test-and-hold" arrangements upon arrival or during quarantine in Hong Kong, the Government will specify the UK, which is currently a Group B specified place, as a Group A2 specified place with effect from June 28, having closely monitored the epidemic developments there, the prevalence of mutant virus strains and the case importation risks that may be posed to Hong Kong.

All persons who have stayed in any Group A2 specified place on the day of boarding for Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day have to present at boarding negative result proof of a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft, as well as the confirmation of a room reservation in a designated quarantine hotel in Hong Kong. On arrival at Hong Kong, they will be subject to the "test-and-hold" arrangement at the airport, and on confirmation of negative test results, they will then be required to board the designated

transport arranged by the Government to proceed to the designated quarantine hotels for compulsory quarantine. They will be subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels, with four tests to be conducted during the period, followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period as well as compulsory testing on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong at any Community Testing Centre. The arrangements of shortened quarantine period for fully vaccinated persons are not applicable to persons who have stayed in Group A2 specified places.

Testing requirement for boarding flights

Currently, persons who have stayed in any Group A1 specified place, Group A2 specified place, Group B specified place or Taiwan during the relevant period are required to present at boarding negative result proof of a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 conducted within 72 hours before the scheduled time of departure of the aircraft.

To ensure that Hong Kong continues to adopt stringent measures to prevent the importation of cases, the Government will tighten the nucleic acid testing requirement. From June 26, the Government will specify that the relevant test must be a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)-based nucleic acid test. Results of tests conducted using other testing platforms (e.g. reverse transcription loop-mediated isothermal amplification, RT-LAMP) cannot be considered to have fulfilled the relevant specified boarding requirement.

The Government will gazette the relevant updated specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to effect the above measures.

"The Government will continue to closely monitor the epidemic situation of various places, the prevalence of new virus variants, vaccination progress, 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 relevant places as the situation warrants," a Government spokesman said.

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