

Government tightens restrictions and compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China

The Government has gazetted the specifications 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 the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), and published the latest compulsory testing notice under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J), to tighten the compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China, and restrict the boarding of persons who have stayed in South Africa for Hong Kong.

A Government spokesman said, "According to the guidelines of the World Health Organization, the incubation period of the virus could be as long as 14 days. While 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, and noting the drastic change of the global pandemic situation with the new virus variant found in more countries, there is a need for the Government to introduce resolute measures immediately to tighten the compulsory quarantine requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China, so as 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.

"Furthermore, taking into account the discovery of the new virus variant with high transmissibility in South Africa, it is necessary for the Government to adopt stringent measures to restrict the boarding of persons who have stayed in South Africa for Hong Kong."

The Secretary for Food and Health has exercised the power under the relevant Regulations to make specifications and notice, which took effect from 0.00am on December 25. Details are as below:

1. The requirements under Cap. 599C and Cap. 599E have been tightened so that 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 at Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day have to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in designated quarantine hotels;
2. The requirements under Cap. 599H have been tightened so that all persons

who have stayed in South Africa, apart from the United Kingdom (UK) as announced earlier, for more than two hours in the past 21 days will not be allowed to board for Hong Kong; and

3. An updated compulsory testing notice has been made under Cap. 599J, which imposes compulsory testing requirements to persons subject to compulsory quarantine who arrived at Hong Kong during the period of December 2 to December 23, 2020 and have stayed in the UK, as well as persons subject to compulsory quarantine who arrived at Hong Kong during the period of December 2 to December 24, 2020 and have stayed in the remaining places outside China. Apart from the requirement to undergo testing at the community testing centres or the designated quarantine hotels on the 19th or 20th day following their arrival at Hong Kong, the relevant persons have to stay at their place of residence, private premises or the place of quarantine specified on the quarantine order until the test result is available.

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."