

Government invokes place-specific flight suspension mechanism

The Government announced today (April 18) the invocation of the place-specific flight suspension mechanism for India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. From 00:00 on April 20, all passenger flights from these places will be prohibited from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days. These places will also at the same time be specified as extremely high-risk Group A specified places under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), so as to restrict persons who have stayed in these places from boarding for Hong Kong. The suspension will be effective for 14 days.

The Government implemented on April 14 the tightened flight-specific suspension mechanism, as well as the new place-specific flight suspension mechanism in parallel. Under the place-specific flight suspension mechanism, if a total of five or more passengers among all flights from the same place, regardless of airline, were confirmed by arrival tests for COVID-19 with the N501Y mutant strain within a seven-day period, the Government would invoke Cap. 599H to prohibit all passenger flights from that place from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days, and would at the same time specify that place as an extremely high-risk place under Cap. 599H to restrict persons who have stayed in that place for more than two hours from boarding passenger flights for Hong Kong for 14 days, so as to prevent persons from the relevant place from arriving at Hong Kong via transit.

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A Government spokesman said, "With confirmed cases involving the N501Y mutant strain detected for the first time in the community in Hong Kong, for prudence's sake, the Government has applied the criteria of the newly implemented place-specific flight suspension mechanism retrospectively for 14 days on places where there had been imported cases confirmed by arrival tests that carried the N501Y mutant strain. India, Pakistan, and the Philippines all had seven-day cumulative number of relevant cases that reached the relevant criteria in the past 14 days, and the Government will therefore invoke the place-specific flight suspension mechanism for these three places."

The place-specific suspension mechanism for these three places will be effective for 14 days from midnight on April 20. Relevant restrictions will include the prohibition of passenger flights from these places from landing in Hong Kong, as well as specifying these three places as Group A specified places under Cap. 599H to restrict any person who have stayed in these places for more than two hours on the day of boarding or 21 days before that day from boarding for Hong Kong.

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At the same time, to enhance the testing of persons returning to Hong Kong from overseas places, the Government will issue a compulsory testing notice for persons who returned to Hong Kong from extremely high-risk places

specified under Cap. 599H (that is the current Group A specified places). After completing the compulsory quarantine for 21 days as well as the testing on the 12th and 19th day during quarantine, these persons returning to Hong Kong will also need to self-monitor further for another seven days, and be subject to nucleic acid testing on the 26th day of their return to Hong Kong.

“The Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the global and local epidemic situation, and will further adjust the relevant inbound prevention and control measures as necessary,” the Government spokesman said.