

Government maintains boarding restrictions for places with severe epidemic situation and compulsory quarantine arrangements

The Government announced today (January 7) that in view of the developments of the global COVID-19 epidemic situation, it is necessary to maintain the measure under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to restrict persons who have stayed in the United Kingdom (UK) or South Africa from boarding flights for Hong Kong, as well as the tightened 21-day compulsory quarantine requirement 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 Cap. 599H for persons arriving in Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China.

Due to the emergence of different new virus variants in the UK and South Africa which may be much more transmissible according to experts' preliminary assessment, and in view of their already prevalent spread in those places, as a precautionary measure, the Government had gazetted the relevant specification at the end of December last year, that any person who has stayed in the UK or South Africa for more than two hours on the day of boarding or during the 21 days before that day are not allowed to board for Hong Kong.

At the same time, with reference to advice from experts that the incubation period for a very small proportion of persons could be longer than 14 days, coupled with the rapid and drastic change of the global epidemic situation, the Government had at the end of last year amended Cap. 599C, Cap. 599E and Cap. 599H to provide for the flexibility in lengthening the compulsory quarantine period for persons arriving in Hong Kong from a certain place (to a maximum of 28 days), and the period for a certain place from which persons who arrive in Hong Kong have stayed before the arrival for determining the quarantine and boarding requirements (to a maximum of 28 days). The Government had also required that from December 25, 2020, all persons arriving in Hong Kong (either via the airport or land boundary control points) who have stayed in places outside China on the day of arrival in Hong Kong or during the 21 days before that day have to undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in designated quarantine hotels.

The epidemic situation worldwide remains severe, with cases of the more transmissible new virus variant detected in an increasing number of places. The situation in the UK, where the new virus variant was first discovered, has further deteriorated in the past two weeks. England is under lockdown again until mid-February, and the outlook in the short term is

grim. So far, there have also been 15 imported cases of the new virus variant detected in Hong Kong, 13 of which were imported by persons who arrived from the UK, and another new virus variant had been found in two imported cases from South Africa. After reviewing the latest epidemic developments globally and in the relevant places, the Government finds it necessary to maintain the measure to restrict persons who have stayed in the UK and South Africa from boarding for Hong Kong, and the 21-day compulsory quarantine requirement for persons arriving in Hong Kong who have stayed in places outside China.

A Government spokesman said, "The Government recognises that the above requirement is very stringent and may inevitably affect the return journey of a number of Hong Kong residents in the UK or South Africa. However, the Government has the responsibility to guard against the importation of COVID-19 cases, and the new virus variant in particular, in order to protect the well-being of Hong Kong residents. Indeed, it is thanks to the joint efforts of everyone in Hong Kong that the local epidemic situation has only just begun to stabilise somewhat. We simply cannot afford to relax the relevant restrictions at this juncture, lest the anti-epidemic efforts of the entire community go down the drain."

The Government has all along been closely monitoring the developments of the global and local epidemic situation, including the extent and pattern of the spread of the disease in a certain place, and will frequently review the epidemic prevention and control requirements for persons returning to Hong Kong from different parts of the world, and adjust them as needed.

The spokesman said, "The Government will review every two weeks the measure restricting persons who have stayed in the UK or South Africa from boarding for Hong Kong, and the compulsory quarantine requirement for persons who have stayed in places outside China, and will announce whether adjustments are required."

HKSAR Government resolutely safeguards national security without fear

In response to sweeping and erroneous remarks by overseas government officials and politicians on the arrest of certain people for allegedly committing an offence relating to subversion under the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law), a Government spokesman today (January 7) said:

"It is the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)'s constitutional responsibilities to safeguard national security. Since

enactment of the National Security Law by the National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) on June 30, 2020 and promulgation for its application in Hong Kong on the same day in accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (the Basic Law), the HKSAR Government has been discharging its duty to safeguard national security in Hong Kong lawfully and dutifully, without fear or anxiety.

"The National Security Law, or indeed any law in the HKSAR, applies equally to every person in Hong Kong; no one is above the law. We are appalled by remarks made by some overseas government officials that seemed to suggest that people with certain political beliefs should be immune to legal sanctions.

"Hong Kong prides itself on the rule of law; law enforcement agencies are duty-bound to take action against unlawful acts, regardless of the political background of the suspects. Arrests made are based on evidence and strictly in accordance with relevant laws and regulations.

"As provided for in the Basic Law, the Department of Justice of the HKSAR Government makes independent prosecutorial decisions based on evidence, applicable laws and in accordance with its Prosecution Code, free from any interference. Any person who is prosecuted has the right to a fair trial by our independent courts, and the burden is on the prosecution to prove that the accused committed a crime beyond reasonable doubt before there can be a conviction. Enshrined in the Basic Law – Articles 2, 19 and 85, the courts of the HKSAR enjoy judicial power independently, including that of final adjudication, free from any interference.

"Contrary to allegations made by some overseas commentators, the National Security Law clearly stipulates four types of offences endangering national security and the penalties. At the same time, the National Security Law contains specific provisions upholding Hong Kong people's rights and freedoms under the Basic Law as well as the relevant provisions of international covenants on human rights as applied to Hong Kong. The Law also provides for the presumption of innocence, the prohibition of double jeopardy, and the right to defend oneself and other rights in judicial proceedings that a criminal suspect, defendant and other parties in judicial proceedings are entitled to under the law.

"These important features have put the National Security Law on par with, if not superior to, similar national security laws in other jurisdictions. In making slandering remarks about the National Security Law, many overseas critics are clearly adopting double standards and merely exposing their prejudice against the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong.

"The purpose of the National Security Law is to prevent, stop and punish acts and activities endangering national security in accordance with the law. Article 22 of the National Security Law stipulates that any person who organises, plans, commits or participates in acts by force or threat of force

or other unlawful means with a view to subverting the State power shall be guilty of an offence. There is a clear line between political pluralism and attempts to seriously undermining the performance of government duties and functions. Such vicious plot would not be tolerated in any country.

"Since implementation of the National Security Law, street violence which had haunted Hong Kong people for months since June 2019 have subsided and stability restored. The legitimate rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong have been upheld and criminals are brought to justice through our independent judiciary. A stable environment is vitally important to the prosperity of Hong Kong and the business activities of both local and overseas enterprises here.

"The HKSAR Government has the determination, perseverance and capability to enforce the National Security Law to safeguard Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. We will not be intimidated by threats of sanctions by overseas governments; nor will we shy away from condemning foreign or external forces that have flagrantly interfered in Hong Kong's affairs."

[Update on Candida auris cases at Princess Margaret Hospital](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Candida auris carrier cases, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital gave the following update today (January 7):

Having conducted contact tracing, five more female patients (aged 28 to 75) in a medicine and geriatrics ward of the hospital were confirmed as Candida auris carriers while not having signs of infection. The patients are now being treated under isolation with stable condition.

The hospital will continue the contact tracing of close contacts of the patients in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. A series of enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted to prevent the spread of Candida auris:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced admission screening for patients and environmental screening procedures;
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients;
4. Application of PCR rapid testing for early identification of carriers;

and

5. Application of designated equipment for patient use to avoid cross-infection.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 7), 57 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 8 258 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 691 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 261 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 633 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 23 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 41 patients are in critical condition, 47 are in serious condition and the remaining 545 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	6406, 6408, 6431, 6463, 6470, 6472, 6474, 6500, 7477, 7501, 7642, 7706, 7764, 7768, 7839, 7868, 7969, 8072, 8084, 8162, 8171, 8207, 8219, 8280, 8291, 8338, 8381, 8388, 8473, 8474, 8475, 8484, 8503, 8530, 8536, 8549, 8604, 8625, 8626, 8633, 8635, 8652, 8654, 8672, 8685, 8714, 8746, 8773, 8800, 8841, 8846, 8872, 8897, 8911, 9004, 9020, 9027

Critical	1989, 3496, 5409, 5511, 5735, 5754, 6125, 6232, 6255, 6386, 6444, 6547, 6607, 6794, 6824, 6913, 6920, 7123, 7259, 7323, 7424, 7680, 7725, 8018, 8055, 8069, 8078, 8126, 8195, 8323, 8384, 8449, 8452, 8564, 8603, 8636, 8725, 8820, 8900, 8937, 9049
Serious	5739, 5745, 5990, 6258, 6543, 6681, 6754, 6850, 6921, 7076, 7127, 7208, 7301, 7305, 7468, 7580, 7632, 7635, 7653, 7734, 7882, 7964, 7980, 7986, 8187, 8221, 8235, 8245, 8371, 8443, 8446, 8477, 8544, 8558, 8587, 8610, 8611, 8738, 8753, 8819, 8832, 8866, 8931, 9015, 9033, 9040, 9060

[LCSD-outsourced library worker tests positive for COVID-19](#)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) today (January 7) said that an outsourced library worker has tested positive for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The outsourced library worker performs duties at the Shui Wo Street Public Library (SWSPL) in Kwun Tong District. She last performed duties on December 28 and all public libraries have been temporarily closed since December 10. She had been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case and was tested for COVID-19. She was notified yesterday (January 6) that she had tested positive for COVID-19.

The worker concerned has no recent travel history. She has been wearing surgical masks when performing duties and her body temperature was normal when undergoing temperature screening during work.

The LCSD has arranged thorough cleaning and sterilisation at the relevant floors and all public facilities of the SWSPL according to guidelines provided by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP).

The LCSD is highly concerned about the COVID-19 epidemic and will continue to maintain close liaison with the CHP. Staff are reminded to pay attention to personal hygiene and to stay vigilant. They should seek medical advice immediately if feeling unwell.