

May 11, 2021

The Editor  
Financial Times

Dear Editor,

Re: Mark Peaker's letter "Hong Kong plays politics with quarantine rules" (May 10, 2021) and Alan Ferrier's letter "Ever-shifting quarantine rules display ineptitude". Their assertions are untrue and unfounded.

As a precautionary measure to prevent the importation of more transmissible virus variants emerging late 2020 in different places, the Government specified the United Kingdom, South Africa, Brazil, and Ireland respectively as extremely high-risk places, restricting people in those places from boarding a flight for Hong Kong. In assessing the epidemic situation of such places and the public health risks they pose to Hong Kong, we consider not only COVID-19 incidence but also actual passenger flow with and importation of infected cases to Hong Kong.

Upon regular review and having regard to the stabilising epidemic situation including vaccination rate in the UK and Ireland, the Government downgraded them to very high-risk places (Group A2) with effect from May 7, thereby lifting the flight boarding restriction and allowing flights to resume. Inbound arrivals are still subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels and compulsory testing after quarantine. The Government will continue to observe the epidemic situation of such places and may further downgrading such places to high-risk places (Group B).

The criteria for triggering flight suspension and boarding restriction in view of importation of infected cases with virus variant have been made public in a transparent manner, and the Government has upgraded India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines within April under the mechanism accordingly.

Meanwhile, France is currently a high-risk place (Group B), and inbound travellers are subject to 21-day compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotels. Starting from 0.00am on May 12 (Hong Kong time), those who are fully vaccinated will be subject to 14-day compulsory quarantine in designated quarantine hotel and compulsory testing after quarantine. France has never seen importation of cases triggering the suspension mechanism.

Protecting public health will continue to be our utmost consideration. We will continue to closely monitor the local and global epidemic situation, vaccination progress and the volume of cross-boundary passenger traffic, and will further adjust the relevant boarding, quarantine and testing requirements based on public health considerations in a transparent manner as necessary and appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

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Secretary for Food and Health  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region