

## VIRUS OUTBREAK: Government still mulling UK travel ban

Written by Taipei Times

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A UK government travel ban public notice is pictured at Kings Cross train station in London on Sunday.

**Photo: EPA-EFE**

The government is considering whether to ban flights from the UK as other countries have done to stem the spread of a new strain of COVID-19 that is reportedly more infectious, Minister of Transportation and Communications Lin Chia-lung (林佳龍) said yesterday, adding that the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) would make the final decision on the matter.

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy and the Netherlands, are among the countries and areas that have placed travel curbs on the UK.

“We are discussing the latest developments with the CECC,” Lin told reporters on the sidelines of an event in Taipei.

Separately, Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), head of the CECC, said that Taiwan currently has no plans to ban flights from the UK.

People traveling from the UK need to present a certificate showing that they have tested negative for COVID-19 in a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test before they would be allowed to board a plane, he told reporters, adding that they must also undergo a 14-day quarantine upon arriving in Taiwan.

Lin was asked if the government would revise disease-

prevention regulations for pilots and flight attendants after three EVA Airways Corp (長榮航空) pilots tested positive for COVID-19 following a cargo flight duty to the US, becoming cases No. 760, 765 and 766.

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A subsequent investigation by the CECC found that case No. 765, a New Zealander, did not wear a mask during the flight, despite having symptoms, and likely infected his coworkers on the flight.

Earlier this month, three EVA Air flight attendants and two China Airlines Ltd (華航) cabin crew members were found to have breached quarantine rules for airline workers.

“The government has set very clear disease-prevention guidelines to regulate workers in the civil aviation industry amid the pandemic. In view of the recent breaches by pilots and flight attendants, I have asked officials at the Civil Aeronautics Administration [CAA] and the ministry’s Department of Aviation and Navigation to propose revisions to the guidelines. We are communicating with CECC officials on how they should be executed,” Lin said, adding that the CAA has proposed several options.

Cargo pilots should also thoroughly adhere to the guidelines, and would be punished if they fail to follow regulations, he said.

Any breaches of disease-

prevention regulations could become a loophole causing the disease to spread, which would prompt the government to further tighten restrictions on airline workers, he added.

Currently, pilots and flight attendants are required to undergo quarantine for three days and five days respectively, he said.

EVA Air said in a statement that it has repeatedly reminded cabin crew members to strictly adhere to disease-prevention regulations in Taiwan and other countries, including wearing masks throughout a flight except when they are eating.

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Those failing to follow regulations would be held accountable following an investigation, it said.

The Taoyuan Union of Pilots said that both airlines and flight crew members should cooperate with the CECC when it conducts contact tracing of COVID-19 patients.

“We want to remind all flight crew members that they need to abide by disease-prevention measures and heed personal health conditions before they report for duty. Pilots would only be considered to be acting professionally if they do not work when sick,” union said.

Cargo pilots need to follow quarantine rules to keep airlines operating, as carriers have suffered heavy losses due to reduced passenger traffic, the union said, adding that public support for cargo jet pilots would help sustain them during this difficult time.

Additional reporting by Lin Liang-sheng

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