

# HKSAR Government mapping out plans to bring back Hong Kong residents stranded in India and Pakistan by chartered flights

In response to media enquiries, a Government spokesman said today (April 25) that the Security Bureau is mapping out plans to take Hong Kong residents stranded in India and Pakistan back to Hong Kong by chartered flights.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the governments of India and Pakistan have banned all international flight movements since late March, resulting in Hong Kong residents stranded there unable to return to Hong Kong through normal means for the time being. In recent days, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has received requests for assistance in their return arrangement from Hong Kong residents stranded in the two countries, including the lists of assistance requests referred to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government by chambers of commerce and non-governmental organisations which are concerned about the affected people and Legislative councilors.

After receiving requests for assistance from the Hong Kong residents stranded in India and Pakistan, the Security Bureau and the ImmD have been liaising with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR (OCMFA), the Chinese Embassy in the Republic of India (Chinese Embassy in India) and the Chinese Embassy in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Chinese Embassy in Pakistan) to understand the local situation and take follow-up action, and to provide relevant information as well as practicable and appropriate assistance to the affected Hong Kong residents having regard to their wishes.

Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government has also been liaising with the consulates-general of the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Hong Kong, and contacting several airlines to explore arrangement of flights for the return of the stranded Hong Kong residents.

As at April 24, the ImmD has successfully contacted about 3 200 and 2 000 Hong Kong residents respectively stranded in India and Pakistan, with a preliminary grasp of their basic personal particulars and whereabouts. The ImmD is continuing with the efforts to contact the remaining assistance seekers to facilitate follow-up.

The spokesman said that due to the large number of people requesting for assistance and some of the assistant seekers' contact information being incomplete, the ImmD has strengthened its manpower to proactively follow up the cases with a view to establishing direct contacts with all people concerned as soon as possible. For the Hong Kong residents whom the ImmD has

contacted and obtained detailed information, they are now scattered in different locations in India and Pakistan.

Currently India has imposed strict restrictions on land and air traffic across the nation, and all travel must be approved by the relevant authorities. For Pakistan, it is noted that there is no restriction on domestic transportation and people there are still able to move around, although all international flights have been banned.

Considering the above situations, and having regard to the quarantine arrangements for the returnees and the capacities for testing and the quarantine and treatment facilities, the HKSAR Government would have to adopt a phase approach in assisting the return of the Hong Kong residents by batches subject to the circumstances. The initial plan is to first assist the Hong Kong residents who are now located in New Delhi, the capital of India, or those in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, and their surrounding areas, as well as those with special needs such as people with illness, pregnant women, children and elderly, by taking them back by chartered flights respectively from New Delhi or from Islamabad to Hong Kong. The cost for taking the chartered flights will be borne by the users.

Above said, the detailed arrangements such as the departure date and location of the chartered flights are still subject to various factors, including the approval time of and the facilitation provided by the governments concerned, the actual circumstances and epidemic situation of the concerned country, as well as the land and air traffic or other restrictions of the concerned country. The HKSAR Government will continue to follow up closely with the Chinese Embassy in India and the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, as well as the consulates-general of the two countries in Hong Kong. Updates will be sent to the affected Hong Kong residents as soon as any concrete arrangement is confirmed.

The HKSAR Government appeals to the Hong Kong residents in India and Pakistan who have yet to contact the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) of the ImmD but wish to take the chartered flights to depart from India and Pakistan to Hong Kong, to call ImmD's 24-hour hotline (852) 1868 or email to [1868@immd.gov.hk](mailto:1868@immd.gov.hk) for assistance. AHU officers will follow up according to actual circumstances.