

HKSAR Government continues to assist Hong Kong passengers of Diamond Princess who are hospitalised or under quarantine in Japan

A Government spokesman today (February 27) said that the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Department of Health (DH) have reinforced their staff to Japan to continue to assist the Hong Kong passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise ship who are still in Japan, including patients who are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 and hospitalised, and close contacts of the confirmed cases now under quarantine at land quarantine facilities.

Currently, there are 23 ImmD officers in Japan and a medical team of the DH has also arrived there to follow up with the conditions and needs of the confirmed Hong Kong patients who are still in Japan, providing them with appropriate assistance. The medical team comprised three consultants and senior doctors, including specialists in infectious disease and respiratory medicine, to provide suitable support to the patients and their families.

All passengers on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship disembarked on February 23. At that time, among the 691 confirmed cases of infection with COVID-19, there were 70 cases involving Hong Kong residents. Another 31 Hong Kong residents were regarded as close contacts of the confirmed cases and had been sent to various land quarantine facilities for quarantine for 14 days (counting from the day of last contact with the confirmed cases). Earlier on, two Hong Kong passengers who are close contacts were confirmed to have contracted COVID-19, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 72.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government had arranged three chartered flights to bring 193 Hong Kong residents back home during the period between February 19 and 23. Up till now, another 25 Hong Kong residents have returned Hong Kong on their own by other flights. As at February 26, a total of 218 Hong Kong passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise ship have been put under quarantine at the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate. Among them, seven have subsequently been confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 and sent to hospitals for isolation and treatment.

"The close to one hundred Hong Kong residents who are hospitalised or under quarantine in Japan have been sent to different hospitals or quarantine facilities across 11 different prefectures and cities, namely Aichi, Kanagawa, Tokyo, Chiba, Ibaraki, Gifu, Nara, Yamanashi, Nagano, Osaka and Saitama. ImmD officers have been split into small teams and are assigned to different prefectures and cities to assist Hong Kong residents there. DH's medical team will also visit the confirmed patients and their families in different prefectures and cities as far as practicable to provide appropriate assistance. The medical team will contact the attending doctors of the

confirmed cases and where appropriate, arrange direct conversations with the confirmed patients or their family members to learn more about their conditions for assessing whether the patients have received appropriate medical treatments," the spokesman said.

As of February 26, eight confirmed patients among the Hong Kong passengers have recovered and have been discharged from hospital after treatment. Four of them have returned to Hong Kong and the remaining four are still in Japan to accompany their family members or waiting for assistance in flight arrangement by ImmD officers for their return to Hong Kong. Discharged patients would have been tested twice for COVID-19 and both test results have to be negative before they are discharged from the hospital, underlying that they are no longer infectious. For prudence sake, the DH has provided health advice to each discharged patient and reminded them to proactively contact the DH's Port Health Division staff upon their arrival at Hong Kong International Airport for health assessment and arrangement of a 14-day medical surveillance.

In addition, a Hong Kong resident who was classified as close contact has completed the quarantine in Japan and was permitted to leave. According to the DH's advice, close contacts need to have health assessment by Port Health Division staff upon their return to Hong Kong. If the person being a close contact has not finished a 14-day quarantine counting from the day of disembarkation from the Diamond Princess (i.e. February 23), the person is required to complete the remaining quarantine period in a quarantine centre upon return to Hong Kong. The above-said close contact has returned to Hong Kong and is continuing the quarantine at the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate.

For other close contacts who are still in Japan, they have all now been admitted to the land quarantine facilities to continue quarantine for 14 days, counting from the day of last contact with the confirmed cases. Over the past few days, the HKSAR Government continues to actively consider feasible plans for bringing them back to Hong Kong at an earlier time. However, as they are still under quarantine and might carry certain risk of infection, the various airlines that the HKSAR Government has approached have expressed reservation about providing chartered flight service. The various companies providing land passage services that the Government has approached are also unwilling to accept the service request, noting that the concerned close contacts are scattered across 11 different cities or prefectures in Japan. These close contacts are now admitted to land quarantine facilities and will finish the quarantine on different dates and be tested for COVID-19. The ImmD officers in Japan will continue to follow their situations closely and provide them with necessary assistance, including helping to arrange their early return to Hong Kong after they have completed quarantine in Japan.

Missing man in Kwai Chung located (2)

A man who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Chan Yau-cheung, aged 56, went missing after he left a hostel on Wo Yi Hop Road on February 21 afternoon. Staff of the hostel made a report to Police on the same day.

The man returned to the hostel this afternoon (February 27). He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

Missing man in Kwai Chung located (1)

A man who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Wan Ho-yin, aged 37, went missing after he left a hostel on Wo Yi Hop Road on February 21 afternoon. Staff of the hostel made a report to Police on the same day.

The man was located on Tak Hoi Street, Tsuen Wan this afternoon (February 27). He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

Epidemic prevention work at Chung Ying Street

A Government spokesman said today (February 27) that under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), "the category of persons verified to be Hong Kong residents living in the Mainland side of Sha Tau Kok" have been exempted from compulsory quarantine requirements when entering Sha Tau Kok Frontier Closed Area (FCA) through Chung Ying Street, on the conditions that the persons concerned have not been to other places in the Mainland other than the Sha Tau Kok Mainland Closed Area in the past 14 days, and that they also need to undergo medical surveillance for a period of 14 days.

Hong Kong residents of Sha Tau Kok must first submit proofs of identification and residence to the North District Office for verifying their resident status in order to be exempted from the relevant quarantine

requirements when entering Hong Kong through Chung Ying Street. The spokesman stressed that if these persons enter Hong Kong from the Mainland through other immigration control points or have stayed in other places in the Mainland during the 14 days before, they must be subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine.

To facilitate epidemic prevention work, starting from yesterday (February 26), the Government has stepped up access control at Chung Ying Street located in Sha Tau Kok FCA. Hong Kong residents living in the Sha Tau Kok Mainland Closed Area must undergo medical surveillance when they enter the Hong Kong FCA through Chung Ying Street, i.e. they must wear a surgical mask when going out and measure their body temperature on a daily basis, and call the Department of Health (DH)'s hotline to report if they feel unwell. All persons entering Hong Kong through the Mainland Closed Area of Chung Ying Street must have their temperature checked by DH personnel stationed there.

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The spokesman explained that the Government, in formulating the relevant measures, has taken into account the exceptional circumstances of Chung Ying Street being located within a closed area and the daily needs of local residents. At present, Hong Kong residents living in the Sha Tau Kok Mainland Closed Area cannot leave that closed area and enter other places in the Mainland due to the Mainland's epidemic control. They can only enter Hong Kong through Chung Ying Street. The basic supplies and services in the Sha Tau Kok Mainland Closed Area are limited, with many stores closed due to the epidemic. Thus, these Hong Kong residents have to enter Hong Kong through Chung Ying Street to meet their daily needs. Residents must submit proofs of identification and residence in order to be exempted from the compulsory quarantine. The North District Office, the Police and the DH have deployed personnel at the Chung Ying Street checkpoint to implement the measures and explain the required procedures and arrangements to the residents.

Due to its unique historical background and geographical factors, Chung Ying Street is not an immigration control point. There is no physical barrier in Chung Ying Street as demarcation between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and there is no boundary control facility. No personnel of the Immigration Department are stationed there. Only Police checkpoints are set up administratively to allow holders of valid closed area permits (CAP) to pass through. Geographically, Chung Ying Street connects both the FCA of Hong Kong and the Mainland. The Mainland government has been imposing strict access controls on the closed area, barring entry of Mainland persons unless with permits. The Mainland Closed Area of Chung Ying Street is geographically separated from other places in the Mainland by the Sha Tau Kok River.

In addition, the Police have tightened the arrangements for CAP holders to enter Chung Ying Street. Only Hong Kong residents who live or work in the Hong Kong area on Chung Ying Street and those who live in the Mainland Closed Area adjacent to Chung Ying Street are allowed to enter Chung Ying Street.

After announcement of the Regulation, the Working Group Against Epidemic in Sha Tau Kok, which is comprised of representatives from the Sha Tau Kok District Rural Committee and Sha Tau Kok residents as well as the relevant District Council members, has reflected their views to the North District

Office and the Border District of Police that over the past decades, the daily lives of local residents have spanned across the boundary between the Hong Kong and the Mainland closed areas adjacent to Chung Ying Street. The scope of these residents' activities in the Mainland is currently limited to the closed area adjacent to Chung Ying Street, as their access to other places in the Mainland is not allowed. At present, supplies in the Mainland Closed Area are limited, and most stores are already closed. Therefore, these residents have genuine needs to enter Hong Kong through Chung Ying Street, and the 14-day compulsory quarantine will make it difficult to maintain their living. The Security Bureau, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Food and Health Bureau have given careful considerations to the exceptional circumstances and health risk assessments of Chung Ying Street as well as the genuine needs of these residents to enter Hong Kong through Chung Ying Street to meet their daily needs. Having regard to the above considerations as well as the public health perspective, it is considered an appropriate epidemic preventive measure for these residents to undergo medical surveillance after entering Hong Kong.

Public services to resume in a safe and orderly manner while we fight the virus together

A Government spokesman announced today (February 27) that, upon the instruction of the Steering Committee cum Command Centre in relation to the COVID-19 virus, the Government will implement targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures and gradually resume more public services from March 2 in an orderly manner.

"Since the implementation of the special work arrangement for government employees on January 29, government departments have been monitoring their operations closely and making adjustments having regard to the situation on the ground. The objective is to continue to provide essential, emergency and limited-scale public services to members of the public while fighting the virus," the spokesman said.

"While fighting the epidemic remains the top priority of the Government, taking into account the need for the functioning of the society, bureaux/departments should implement targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures, and provide more public services from March 2 onwards. The Government's ultimate goal is to resume full public services when conditions permit.

"Bureaux/departments will implement targeted measures to reduce social contact, for instance, introducing flexible working hours to reduce staff

using public transport during peak hours, and adopting a roster system to reduce the number of staff working in an office at any one time. The frequency, duration and mode of meetings will also be adjusted to reduce social contact.

"In addition, bureaux/departments may also restrict the number of visitors at any one time by making use of measures such as scheduled appointments, drop boxes, quota system, etc.

"The Government will, with regard to the situation on the ground, implement various infection control measures at government buildings and offices to reduce the risk of infection and the spread of the virus. These measures include enhancing the cleansing of public facilities, such as lifts and escalators, checking the body temperature of persons entering government buildings and offices, providing alcohol hand sanitiser and sanitizing mats, etc. In this connection, members of the public may need to line up to enter government buildings due to the need for body temperature check. Those with symptoms such as fever or cough will be advised to seek medical assistance and not to enter the building. They will also be advised to access the public services they need through other possible means such as electronic platforms or drop boxes.

"The Government will gradually resume public services after implementing targeted measures to reduce social contact and infection control measures to protect the health of their staff and members of the public. Some examples include:

- The Leisure and Cultural Services Department will reopen some of its outdoor sports facilities, such as tennis courts, lawn bowling greens and jogging tracks, subject to certain special arrangements. Taking the tennis courts at Victoria Park as an example, they will be reopened on March 3 and, to achieve social distancing and prevent crowds, each tennis court will be limited to four users. The spectator stands, changing rooms and shower facilities will remain closed temporarily to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.
- The Transport Department will continue to increase the quotas for online appointments for renewal of full driving licences/vehicle licences or application for international driving permits at four Licensing Offices (Admiralty, Cheung Sha Wan, Kwun Tong and Sha Tin) so as to reduce the number of people in the waiting area at those offices. Walk-in counter services will continue to be suspended to reduce social contact.
- Apart from drop boxes, the Building Information Centre, receipt counters and general enquiry counters of the Buildings Department at North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices will be reopened to provide services including inspection and copying services for private building records,

receipt of documents and handling of enquiries from members of the public. The Department will limit the number of service users at any one time in order to reduce social contact.

- All public estate management offices under the Housing Authority (HA) will resume services to five days a week. Where necessary, staff of the estate management offices will control the flow of people and queuing order at the reception lobby to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus. Flat selection sessions of Home Ownership Scheme 2019 will be resumed on a limited scale. To better manage the flow of people and to allow more space between applicants, HA will suitably adjust the number of flat selection sessions per day as well as the number of people invited to those sessions.

"More public services will be resumed gradually starting from next Monday. If departments require more time to make necessary manpower deployment, procure supplies and put in place special arrangements, they will resume their services by phases. Bureaux/departments will make announcement of their latest service arrangements.

"However, we must point out that, in order to prevent the spread of the virus more effectively, certain public facilities, such as public swimming pools, indoor sports facilities, etc. are not suitable for reopening at this stage. We hope members of the public will understand."