

Land-based cross-boundary transport services

The services of cross-boundary coach, shuttle bus (Gold Bus) (for Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port only) and local public transport at Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port are in normal operation today (February 4).

"The public transport operations at the above two boundary control points are smooth in general today. As at 4pm today, the total number of passengers travelling via Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port is about 21 960 and 6 480 respectively. We note that the total number of cross-boundary passengers using the two boundary control points has not increased so far as compared to the total number of cross-boundary passengers of yesterday (i.e. before the suspension of immigration clearance for passengers of the Lok Ma Chau Control Point and the Lo Wu and Lok Ma Chau Stations). The total number of cross-boundary passengers travelling via the two control points as at 4pm today is about 20 per cent of the total number of cross-boundary passengers for all the rail-based and land-based boundary control points of yesterday (February 3)", a spokesman for the Transport Department (TD) said.

"Regarding public transport services, the services of cross-boundary coach, shuttle bus (Gold Bus) (for Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port only) and local public transport serving Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port are able to cater for passenger demand. We note that the number of cross-boundary passengers at Shenzhen Bay Port has increased slightly as at 4pm today. However, it remains at a low level comparing with that of normal days", the spokesman added.

The TD has approved different cross-boundary coach operators operating at Shenzhen Bay Port to provide cross-boundary coach services via Shenzhen Bay Port at Sheung Wan, Wan Chai, Prince Edward/Mong Kok, Tuen Mun and Tsuen Wan. Regarding the introduction of three new cross-boundary coach routes and frequency enhancement by China Travel Service (Hong Kong) Limited (CTS) as reported by the media, according to CTS, they provide cross-boundary coach services in accordance with the routing and frequency approved by the TD. The TD has not allowed operators to introduce new routes or enhance frequency of routes using Shenzhen Bay Port in view of the suspension of immigration clearance services of some land-based boundary control points. The TD has requested CTS to correct the relevant information.

The TD will continue to monitor the operation of public transport services serving Shenzhen Bay Port and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Port. Passengers should pay attention to the Government's latest announcements about the cross-boundary transport news and approach the operators concerned to enquire the detailed service arrangement.

Public hospital services affected HA calls on employees to resume duty

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) said that continuing industrial action has seriously affected public hospital services and even some emergency services.

The HA Director (Cluster Services), Dr Deacons Yeung, summed up the impact of industrial action on public hospital services to the media today (February 4) and called on employees to return to work. "Public hospital services rely on the collaboration of healthcare staff of different disciplines, and all are indispensable. I hope that the colleagues on strike will return to work to take care of our patients."

As at 6pm today, a preliminary counting by the HA indicated a total of nearly 5 000 employees were absent from duty, including about 360 doctors, 2 800 nurses and 1 000 allied health professionals.

"Due to the absence of operating theatre healthcare staff, public hospitals can only maintain basic emergency surgery services, while some hospitals even have to postpone cancer surgeries. In the Clinical Oncology Departments, the shortfall in therapeutic radiographers causes delay in commencement of cancer treatment for patients. The shortage of clinical oncology nursing staff has also affected the provision of chemotherapy treatment services."

Other severely affected departments include the Neonatal Intensive Care Units and the Accident and Emergency Departments. A hospital needs to close one of the Emergency Medicine Wards. The more seriously affected clusters include those in the Kowloon Central, Kowloon West and New Territories East Hospital Clusters.

Dr Yeung pointed out that further impact on patient services would depend on the number of employees joining in the industrial action and which departments they belong to. The HA Major Incident Control Centre will continue to closely monitor the situation of the operation of public hospitals.

Dr Yeung appeals to colleagues to return to work as soon as possible to provide services to patients in need and join hands in fighting the epidemic. He also thanked the staff who have stayed on duty and being deployed to cope with the extra workload caused by the strike.

Missing woman in Sheung Shui located

A woman who went missing in Sheung Shui has been located.

Hu Dingxiu, aged 76, went missing after she left her residence in Ching Ho Estate on January 21. Her family made a report to Police on January 25.

Police located the woman in Lin Tong Mei, Sheung Shui, on February 2 afternoon. She sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

Flexibility arrangement to extend validity period of foreign domestic helpers' contracts

In response to a temporary ban by the Philippine Government on Filipino nationals from travelling to the People's Republic of China, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the HKSAR Government today (February 4) announced a flexibility arrangement which will take immediate effect. In processing affected employers' applications, the HKSAR Government will work to extend the validity period of the employers' contracts with their outgoing foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to help them cope with the special situation. The flexibility arrangement aims to assist those employers whose contracts with their existing FDHs are due to expire soon, but the newly hired FDHs or the FDHs they intend to hire cannot fly in to commence the new contracts due to the temporary ban.

"According to Clause 15(a) of the Standard Employment Contract (SEC), an employer may vary Clause 2 of the SEC to extend the period of employment by not more than one month by mutual agreement between the employer and the FDH, and with approval from the Director of Immigration. Prior consent from the Commissioner for Labour is required for extending the period of an FDH contract beyond a month," a Government spokesman said.

"In order to assist those families with the need to extend the contract with their current FDH for more than a month, the Commissioner for Labour has given in-principle consent for all FDH contracts that will expire on or before March 31, 2020, to vary the period stated in Clause 2 of the SEC by extending the period of employment up to May 31, 2020, on the basis that such variation is mutually agreed by both the employer and the FDH. Under the

above-mentioned circumstances, employers and FDHs may apply directly to the Director of Immigration for extension of stay of their FDHs. Upon receiving the applications, the Immigration Department will process them in accordance with its established procedures and policies when deciding the extension of stay applications. Employers in need may apply to the Immigration Department for extension of stay of their FDHs on or before March 31, 2020," the spokesman further said.

"We hope that the flexibility arrangement can help the families affected by the situation so that they can continue to retain their current FDHs temporarily while waiting for the new FDHs that they hired or intend to hire to report for duty upon the lifting of the ban by the Philippine Government," the Government spokesman said.

The application for extension of stay of FDHs may be submitted directly during office hours or by post to the Foreign Domestic Helpers Section at Immigration Tower in Wan Chai. The required documents for submitting the application are as follows:

- Visa/Extension of Stay Application Form for Domestic Helper from Abroad (ID 988A) completed and signed by the FDH;
- the current SEC (ID 407) (please send copy only if applying by post) kept by the employer and the FDH with an amendment clause on extending the period of employment duly signed by both parties at the end of page 4;
- a supporting letter signed by the employer stating the reason(s) for extending the period of employment;
- the FDH's travel document (please send copy only if applying by post); and
- a visa fee of \$230.

The HKSAR Government will continue to monitor the situation closely and review the above flexibility arrangement as necessary.

At the same time, the HKSAR Government has been liaising closely with the Philippine Consulate-General to put across a clear message to the Philippine Government that the temporary ban should be lifted as soon as possible. The HKSAR Government has already put in place comprehensive and effective measures to control the spread of the novel coronavirus in the community. For FDHs and their employers in particular, the HKSAR Government has made a public appeal to them to safeguard their personal health and issued special health advice for them on January 30.

Suspected MERS case reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 4) reported a suspected case of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The case is detailed below:

Sex	Female
Age	3
Affected area involved	Bahrain
High-risk exposure	Nil
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Pending

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed relevant symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).