

Compulsory quarantine implemented smoothly

A Government spokesman said today (February 9) that the implementation of a 14-day compulsory quarantine on people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland starting yesterday has been smooth in general, with the cross-boundary flow of people between Hong Kong and the Mainland reduced significantly as expected and that the requirement for people issued with quarantine orders to stay at home will help reduce the risk of the spread of the virus in the community.

Starting yesterday, all people who enter Hong Kong from the Mainland or who have been to the Mainland in the past 14 days preceding arrival at Hong Kong, including Hong Kong residents, Mainland residents and visitors from other places, shall stay at home or other accommodation for a 14-day compulsory quarantine upon entry, even if they have not developed any symptoms and passed temperature checks. Persons under quarantine have to stay at the dwelling places. They are prohibited to go out or leave Hong Kong. Offenders are subject to a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. As the risk of these people is relatively low, they can conduct compulsory quarantine at home or the dwelling places for 14 days and their family members are not required to conduct compulsory quarantine. There were altogether 468 people, including 411 Hong Kong residents and 57 non-Hong Kong residents, being subject to compulsory quarantine yesterday. Among them, 459 conducted quarantine at homes or hotels while nine others were at accommodation provided by the Government. From the implementation of the measure yesterday till 7pm today, a total of 918 people, including 814 Hong Kong residents and 104 non-Hong Kong residents, were subject to compulsory quarantine, with only 12 of them arranged to be accommodated at Government facilities.

The spokesman stressed that self-discipline and community solidarity in fighting against the disease are of utmost importance to implementation of compulsory quarantine, adding that the Government will ensure the persons under compulsory quarantine stay at homes by spot checks and telephone calls. In addition, most of the people under compulsory quarantine took their initiative to co-operate with the working staff to confirm that they are staying at their dwelling places through the real-time location sharing function of mobile phone communication applications. The spokesman said the Government will continue to monitor and adjust the monitoring methods having regard to the number of people requiring quarantine and whether they co-operate with the authorities etc to ensure that the measures are effective.

Since compulsory quarantine may cause inconvenience to affected people, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and various District Offices have set up 37 hotlines for people to make enquiries. About 130 calls for assistance or enquiries have been received. If people under quarantine are unable to arrange for themselves necessities for their daily living, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) will also provide assistance. Actually, the SWD provided

assistance to 16 people from 10 families yesterday.

To ensure the normal operation of the community including the transportation of all the daily necessities of the public as usual, certain categories of persons (for example cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers) will be exempted from compulsory quarantine. However, the exempted categories of persons during their stay in Hong Kong are subject to medical surveillance and are required to wear masks and check temperature daily for reporting to the Department of Health (DH). In addition, exempted persons are also subject to the temperature check and health declaration procedures carried out by the DH at various boundary control points during arrival and departure clearance.

The spokesman stressed that the measures implemented yesterday have not affected freight services to Hong Kong. The number of goods vehicle trips arriving Hong Kong yesterday was more than 1 900 and there is no need for the public to worry about the supply of food and goods of daily necessities.

The spokesman said compulsory quarantine can be implemented smoothly within a short period of time, thanks to the co-operation of all relevant government departments including the DH, the HAD, the SWD, the Immigration Department, the Police and other disciplinary forces as well as all volunteers. The Government expresses its gratitude to all the participants involved.

With the implementation of the compulsory quarantine, the cross-boundary passenger flow between Hong Kong and the Mainland has been substantially reduced as expected. The total number of arrivals yesterday (February 8) was 23 399, which has dropped 76 per cent when compared to the figure of the previous day. Most of them were Hong Kong residents returning from overseas and international visitors by air. The number of passengers arriving Hong Kong via the two operating land-based control points (i.e. Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge) yesterday was 1 430, registering a drop of 98 per cent from the previous day and most of them were passengers from Macao to Hong Kong. As at 7pm today, the number of arrivals via the Hong Kong International Airport, the control points at the Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge was 14 763, 270 and 810 respectively.

The spokesman said the smooth implementation of compulsory quarantine and the substantially reduced cross-boundary passenger flow can help reduce the risk of transmission and spread of the disease in the community. However, it is also important for the public to beware of social distancing. Pointing out that the coming two weeks are critical, the spokesman appeals to members of the public to stay united to win together the battle against the disease. In particular, members of the public should stay at home as much as possible and refrain from going to crowded places and pay attention to personal hygiene.