

First batch of Hong Kong residents on board Diamond Princess cruise ship return to Hong Kong smoothly (with photos/video)

A total of 106 Hong Kong residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, including the six persons who had completed quarantine at a facility in Saitama Prefecture and were permitted to leave Japan, arrived in Hong Kong from Tokyo safely this morning (February 20) on a chartered flight arranged by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government.

Before disembarkation from the plane, staff of the Port Health Division of the Department of Health (DH) briefed them about the quarantine arrangements and checked their body temperature. All passengers were taken to the quarantine centre in Chun Yeung Estate by pre-arranged coaches to undergo 14 days of quarantine observation.

People who have been arranged to stay at quarantine centres, including these passengers returning Hong Kong, have not developed any symptoms and are not confirmed or suspected infected patients. The operation of the quarantine centre will adopt the mode of independent accommodation with security and healthcare staff on duty round the clock. Transport services for leaving and entering the centre will be provided to people under quarantine. Without written permission from a health officer, people under quarantine cannot leave the centre and will not move around in the community.

A total of 364 Hong Kong residents were originally on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship, including 260 holding the HKSAR passport and around 100 holding a foreign passport. As of February 19, 55 Hong Kong residents on board had been confirmed to be infected with the novel coronavirus and they have to stay in Japan for medical treatment. Thirty-three Hong Kong residents who are close contacts of the confirmed cases have been put under quarantine for an extended period and are unable to return to Hong Kong for the time being. Officers from the Immigration Department will stay in Japan to continue to provide practicable assistance to the Hong Kong residents who are under extended quarantine or treatment.

The task force of the HKSAR Government will today continue to maintain close liaison with the Japanese authority and the cruise operator, and will confirm the list of remaining Hong Kong residents and their test results. They aim to bring back all Hong Kong residents who are permitted to leave the cruise ship to Hong Kong today. A third chartered flight will be arranged as necessary to transfer the remaining Hong Kong residents back to Hong Kong tomorrow.

Any individual who does not take one of the chartered flights to Hong

Kong will be referred to the Port Health Division for assessment immediately on returning to Hong Kong and will still be subject to a maximum of 14 days' quarantine in a quarantine centre.

The HKSAR Government expressed its heartfelt gratitude for the assistance of the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR in the liaison work with the Japanese Government and the active facilitation by the Japanese authority, thereby enabling the HKSAR Government to bring back the first batch of Hong Kong residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship to Hong Kong smoothly.

The HKSAR Government also expressed thanks to Cathay Pacific Airways, which accepted the commission to arrange the chartered flights and its crew members who voluntarily participated in the operation, as well as all participating officers of the Security Bureau, the Immigration Department, the DH, the Hospital Authority and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo.



