

Government to impose mandatory quarantine on people entering Hong Kong from Mainland

In view of the worsening situation of the novel coronavirus infection and the first local infection cases yesterday (February 4), the Government announced today (February 5) that it will impose a 14-day mandatory quarantine on all the people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland, after taking into consideration the advice of the four members of the expert advisory group under the Steering Committee cum Command Centre. It is expected that the measure will further reduce cross-boundary flow of people between Hong Kong and the Mainland, thus reducing the risk of transmission and spread of the disease in the community.

Since the Government raised the number of control points with passenger clearance services suspended from six to 10 yesterday, the flow of people between the Mainland and Hong Kong has been significantly reduced further and the effect is remarkable. The number of passenger trips arriving Hong Kong via the two operating control points (i.e. Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge) yesterday (February 4) was 28 675, which has dropped 64 per cent compared to the figure of 78 954 on February 3 before the measures came into effect. Among them, the number of passenger trips of Hong Kong residents arriving the city was 23 643, which registered a drop of 66 per cent compared to the figure of 69 825 on the previous day, representing 82 per cent of the total number of arrivals. In addition, the number of passenger trips arriving Hong Kong via the Hong Kong International Airport was 41 137, which has dropped 21 per cent when compared to the day before which stood at 52 050. Further analysis revealed that most of the passengers arriving Hong Kong via the airport was international travellers. Only 6 039 were Chinese passport holders, and among them only 244 of them flew into Hong Kong from the Mainland.

The spokesman said that the number of passenger trips of Hong Kong residents departing Hong Kong via the control points at Shenzhen Bay and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge yesterday was 14 218, which has dropped 65 per cent from 41 031 on the previous day.

The spokesman said as the public has raised their awareness on disease prevention and the frequency of the public transport at each control point has reduced, it is expected that the number of people arriving Hong Kong will drop further. However, taking into consideration the latest situation of the disease, the Government considers that efforts should still be stepped up to reduce the cross-boundary flow of people between the Mainland and Hong Kong, in which the majority is Hong Kong residents. To this end, the Chief Executive-in-Council will use the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599) to make subsidiary legislation, requiring all people entering Hong Kong from the Mainland, including Hong Kong residents,

Mainland residents as well as other visitors, to be subject to mandatory quarantine for 14 days upon their arrival. Even if they are entering from other places, if they have visited the Mainland over the past 14 days, mandatory quarantine will still be applicable upon their arrival. The new measure will take effect from 0.00am on February 8 while the coming two days can allow room for the public and visitors affected to make preparation. Relevant government departments will announce details of the regulation and operational arrangements in due course.

The spokesman stressed that freight services between the Mainland and Hong Kong will not be affected. To ensure that supply of goods and food can cope with the implementation of measures on disease prevention and control, the Government will exempt people in the relevant businesses and work who need to frequent between the two places from the mandatory quarantine. They only need to adopt the necessary hygienic measures. Besides, the Government has confirmed with the major suppliers that the supply of food products remains normal and there is no shortage of food. There are sufficient stocks of staple foods including rice and pastas. There is no need for the public to worry.

The Government today also announced the suspension of immigration services at the Kai Tak Cruise Terminal and the Ocean Terminal with immediate effect.

The spokesman said that to minimise the risk of the disease spreading in the community, it is necessary to intensify measures on social distancing. The earlier measures announced by the Government on suspension of classes, work-from-home arrangement for some civil servants, suspension of some public services, cancellation of government events, etc, are still in effect. The spokesman appeals strongly to members of the public to stay at home as much as possible, refrain from going to crowded places and pay attention to personal hygiene. It also appeals to enterprises to make flexible work arrangement for employees to tie in with the Government strategies to fight the disease.

The spokesman said that the Government understands that enterprises and members of the public are affected by the anti-epidemic measures. The Government will therefore set up a relevant fund of over \$10 billion and formulate proposals as soon as possible to offer assistance to enterprises and members of the public. The Government is also examining the rounds of relief measures that it rolled out earlier in response to the economic downturn and the social incidents. It will extend the effective periods or even enhance the measures if required. Meanwhile, the Government also appeals to landlords of shops to help tenants weather the difficult times together.

The spokesman said the Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the disease and listen to advice of experts. It will not hesitate to roll out measures as and when required taking into account the situation. As we are facing a severe situation, the Government hopes that all the people will stay united and set aside the differences so as to win together the battle against the disease.