

## 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.