

Immigration Department and HKETO (Tokyo) assist Hong Kong residents quarantined in cruise (with photo)

A spokesman for the Security Bureau today (February 15) said that the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Tokyo (HKETO) have been endeavouring to provide practical assistance to the Hong Kong residents under quarantine on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship docking in Yokohama, Japan.

According to the information provided by the cruise operator, there are around 330 Hong Kong residents on board, including 260 holding a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport and around 70 holding a foreign passport. Among them, 11 have been confirmed to have infected with the novel coronavirus.

The ImmD has contacted most of the affected Hong Kong residents, including the infected patients who are hospitalised for treatment, to understand their needs and provide practicable assistance.

So far, the ImmD has sent four officers to Japan to provide assistance to the affected Hong Kong residents together with the HKETO. Although officials from the HKSAR Government could not board the cruise ship, they have through the cruise operator been delivering medicine and daily necessities to Hong Kong residents in need. They will continue to reflect the needs of those concerned to the cruise operator and the doctors on duty.

The HKETO and the ImmD today delivered, through the cruise operator, gift packs containing surgical masks and disinfection products to the Hong Kong residents aboard as a token of care by the HKSAR Government. The HKETO also met with representatives of the cruise operator this morning to know more about the conditions of those Hong Kong residents to ensure that they are well taken care of and to reflect their wishes to the cruise operator.

Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government has been maintaining close contact with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. According to the latest information obtained, the Japanese authorities advised that the quarantine period would in principle end on February 19. It is however not clear yet as to the exact arrangements after completion of the quarantine period, for example whether all passengers and crew members would require further testing, particularly for those who had close contacts with the confirmed cases. The HKSAR Government is urging the Japanese authorities to advise on such information as soon as possible. Subject to the Japanese authorities' arrangements, the HKSAR Government will confirm the arrangements of the Hong Kong residents concerned upon their return to Hong Kong as advised by the Department of Health.

The HKSAR Government is liaising with airlines to formulate plans to assist the relevant Hong Kong residents to return to Hong Kong as soon as possible. Detailed arrangements will be confirmed later. The Immigration officers will contact all Hong Kong residents on board in the coming one or two days to gauge their views.

There are nearly 3 700 passengers and crew members on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship. According to the information provided by the Japanese authorities, as at February 13, there were a total of 218 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus infection. All passengers and crew members have been required by the Japanese authorities to remain on board and put under quarantine since February 5.

