

Last affected Hong Kong passenger of Diamond Princess returns to Hong Kong

A spokesman for the Security Bureau (SB) said today (April 10) that the last Hong Kong resident who had contracted COVID-19 while aboard the Diamond Princess cruise ship earlier and was hospitalised in Japan has returned to Hong Kong. Staff of the Immigration Department (ImmD) who had been staying in Japan to assist the Hong Kong residents hospitalised or discharged from hospitals have also completed their mission and returned to Hong Kong today.

In early February this year, a cluster of confirmed COVID-19 infection cases occurred on the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Yokohama, Japan. Of the some 3 700 passengers and crew members initially on board, there were some 370 Hong Kong passengers. Among the 712 COVID-19 confirmed cases associated with the cruise ship, 76 patients were Hong Kong residents who were thereafter hospitalised in Japan for isolation and treatment. Three Hong Kong residents among them unfortunately passed away. The remaining 73 patients were discharged from hospital and have all returned to Hong Kong or their places of residence.

As for other Hong Kong residents on board the cruise ship, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government arranged three chartered flights to bring a total of 193 Hong Kong residents home between February 19 and 23. Upon arrival in Hong Kong, they were transferred to the quarantine centre at Chun Yeung Estate (CYE) for a 14-day quarantine. Another 144 Hong Kong residents returned on their own by other flights including 25 close contacts of the confirmed patients who had completed quarantine in Japan. For those who returned to Hong Kong on their own, had they not completed the 14-day quarantine at the land quarantine facilities in Japan, they were required to complete the remaining quarantine period at a quarantine centre upon arrival in Hong Kong. Of the 231 passengers of the Diamond Princess who were admitted to CYE for quarantine, nine subsequently tested positive for COVID-19 and had to be sent to hospitals for isolation and treatment.

The above operation of bringing Hong Kong residents home from Japan by chartered flights was led by the Under Secretary for Security and the Director of Immigration. Other members included a total of 75 officers from the SB, the ImmD, the Department of Health (DH) and the Hospital Authority (HA). The ImmD later dispatched 35 staff by batches as reinforcement teams to Japan to assist the more than 100 Hong Kong residents who were there at that time for medical treatment or undergoing quarantine. The DH also dispatched three doctors to Japan between February 26 and March 4 to assist the confirmed patients and their families.

The spokesman said, "The HKSAR Government expressed profound condolences on the passing of the patients and the deepest sympathies to their families. The incident could not have been resolved smoothly without the staunch support that the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the HKSAR and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan rendered to the HKSAR Government, as well as the co-operation given by the Japanese authorities, for which the HKSAR Government was deeply grateful. The HKSAR Government also expressed thanks to Cathay Pacific Airways again for accepting the commission to arrange the chartered flights, and to its crew members who volunteered to participate in the operation; the Hong Kong Airport Authority for its assistance in various aspects; the SB, the ImmD, the DH and the HA for executing the operation; as well as the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo for its continuous assistance in taking on the co-ordination role and the provision of on-site support."