

SCMA speaks on assisting Hong Kong people in Hubei

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, after attending a radio programme this morning (February 15):

Reporter: Regarding the 10 confirmed patients, according to the information in Wuhan, the Government has been late in announcing their confirmation. What is the latest situation? Secondly, about the people stranded in Hubei Province, how long can the Government arrange the first batch of them? How many quarantine sites you are looking for to keep them?

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs: As regards to the 10 confirmed cases of Hong Kong people in Hubei, our priority is to offer the necessary assistance and support to them upon receipt of the requests. Specifically, our colleagues in Wuhan Economic and Trade Office have rendered assistance to them in securing hospital places and ensuring that they receive medical treatment in local hospitals. In announcing the relevant information, it has been our principle that we will do it in an open and transparent way. So, for information related to the situation in Hong Kong, such as the measures which we have introduced, the confirmed cases in Hong Kong, the contact tracing information, etc, we will provide them in the daily briefing. So we have not announced the information concerning the confirmed cases outside Hong Kong, but should there be an interest or concern, we will be happy to do so.

As regards to the operation to take those Hong Kong people stranded in Hubei back to Hong Kong, we have been making the necessary assessments and planning from day one upon receipt of the requests. It is important that we can secure quarantine centres of sufficient capacity so that when they return to Hong Kong, they would be subject to this quarantine arrangement. Given that the total number of Hong Kong people in Hubei (who have sought assistance) is more than 2,200, obviously we have to do it by batches. For each batch, I think we are talking about 150 to 200 people. That means we have to ensure that upon their return to Hong Kong, we have this size of quarantine facilities available. That is why I appeal to society to give support, and also for those districts where the quarantine centres will be placed, I hope they would understand and give their support so that we can secure these arrangements. Hence, we can talk to the local authorities in Hubei and make the (return) arrangement as early as possible. Our objective is to do it as quickly as possible. When we are ready, of course we would provide more details and information to all of you.

Reporter: About the 10 confirmed cases in Hubei, when did you learn about them and when did you announce it?

Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs: I think it is within days.

My point is that it is not our practice to make such announcements because all the announcements we made are concerned with information related to fighting against the disease. We focus on the information related to the Hong Kong situation. That is why we do it in the daily briefing. But surely if there is concern or interest in such information, we would be happy to provide that.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)