

Second batch of chartered flights to take HK people stranded in Hubei back to HK

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government announced today (March 16) that it would arrange the second batch of chartered flights to take Hong Kong residents currently stranded in Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan in Hubei Province back to Hong Kong. The costs will be borne by the HKSAR Government. The Wuhan Economic and Trade Office of the HKSAR Government (Wuhan ETO) will arrange transportation for returnees to go to the airport in Wuhan.

On the registration arrangement for the second batch of chartered flights, a spokesman for the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau said that for Hong Kong residents who are now in Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan and who have not previously contacted the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department (AHU) or the Wuhan ETO, if they wish to return to Hong Kong, they can call the (852)1868 hotline or contact the AHU through email at 1868@immd.gov.hk for registration before 6pm on March 17. They need to provide the contact person's name, telephone number and current address during registration for contact and follow-up by the AHU.

The spokesman emphasised that Hong Kong residents currently in Xiaogan, Xianning and Huangshi who have earlier sought assistance from the AHU or the Wuhan ETO need not register again by calling the (852)1868 hotline or through email. AHU officers have been notifying the relevant Hong Kong residents by text messages, and will contact them by phone to confirm their registration, including assisting them to fill in the health assessment form of the Department of Health.

Hong Kong residents currently in Wuhan who have earlier sought assistance from the AHU or the Wuhan ETO also need not register again by calling the (852) 1868 hotline or through email. Since the HKSAR Government had completed registration for those Hong Kong residents who wished to take the first batch of chartered flights to Hong Kong, there were new requests for assistance from Hong Kong residents in Wuhan. AHU officers will contact these Hong Kong residents by phone to confirm whether they can be arranged to take the second batch of chartered flights.

The spokesman said, "All people taking the chartered flights to return to Hong Kong must be Hong Kong residents. In order to reduce the risk of cross-infection during the return journey, Hong Kong residents who develop fever, respiratory tract symptoms or other signs of infectious diseases are not suitable to board the chartered flights. Health screenings will be conducted for each passenger before boarding. Those with fever, abnormal vital signs, respiratory tract symptoms or other signs of infectious diseases will not be allowed to board the plane."

"While the HKSAR Government will take measures to minimise the risk of cross-infection among Hong Kong residents during the return journey, it will be unavoidable for them to travel from their current residential places in Hubei Province to the airport, and to take the flights back to Hong Kong in groups. Also, most of the Hong Kong residents taking the second batch of chartered flights will need to take more time to travel from their residential places to the airport in Wuhan. Therefore, Hong Kong residents who wish to take the chartered flights should be aware of the potential risks and consider their health condition in deciding whether they are fit for travel."

"Taking into consideration the potential public health risk, the people concerned will be arranged to undergo 14 days of quarantine observation at a quarantine centre upon their arrival in Hong Kong."

For Hong Kong residents in Hubei Province with relatively urgent needs, such as pregnant women, those who suffer from serious illnesses or are urgently in need of medical treatments in Hong Kong, and secondary school graduates who need to sit for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, the HKSAR Government has already arranged for them to take the first batch of chartered flights back to Hong Kong as far as possible. For Hong Kong residents with urgent needs who are still in Hubei Province, the HKSAR Government will discuss the matter with the Hubei Provincial Government and relevant local departments, and seek medical advice on whether they are fit for travel, with the aim of taking them back to Hong Kong on the second batch of chartered flights as far as practicable.

As for Hong Kong residents who are now in areas other than Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan with no urgent needs, the HKSAR Government will further discuss with the Hubei Provincial Government and make arrangements for them in stages. The spokesman appealed to them not to call the (852)1868 hotline or make enquiries through email at the moment. The HKSAR Government will make further announcement on the arrangement as soon as it is available.

After obtaining the number of assistance cases, the HKSAR Government will consider all factors, including operational arrangements and capacity of quarantine facilities, in working out the number of chartered flights and passengers to be carried by the second batch of flights as far as practicable.

Currently, more than 3 400 Hong Kong residents who had sought assistance from the HKSAR Government are still stranded in different areas of Hubei Province, among which more than 700 are in Xiaogan, Xianning and Huangshi.