

CORONAVIRUSHK

HK tightens border control

Arrivals from more regions to have mandatory quarantines

By HE SHUSI in Hong Kong
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The government on Tuesday issued a Red Outbound Travel Alert to more countries, which will require arrivals who have been to Italy or visited certain regions of France, Germany, Spain and Japan in the last 14 days to be quarantined — beginning Saturday.

Local leaders believe these new measures can effectively stop imported cases. They said restrictions on certain regions of these countries are based on the assessment that medical systems there are reliable and reflect the real situation.

The new arrangement covers Bourgogne-Franche-Comte and Grand Est of France, North Rhine-Westphalia of Germany, Spain's La Rioja, Madrid and Pais Vasco, and Hokkaido of Japan.

It will also apply to the whole country of Italy — to replace the existing three areas of Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto in the country.

All arrivals who have been to these places in the past 14 days will stay in quarantine facilities for 14 days, the Department of Health said in a statement.

The same quarantine measures announced earlier for people who have been to South Korea and Iran in the past 14 days remain unchanged.

The health authority again



Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor talks to the media on Tuesday before an Executive Council meeting, during which she announced government plan to improve tighter border control. PARKER ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

“The public should be aware of potential health risks before traveling overseas.” the Department of Health

advised the public to consider delaying all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, as the transmission of the novel coronavirus has been increasing around the world.

It also noted that a number of

COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong recently are related to a tour group to India, indicating the possibility of community transmission there.

The public should be aware of potential health risks before traveling overseas, the authority stressed.

A spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection said that the government will review and adjust these measures according to new developments.

Executive Councilor Lam Ching-choi noted that the affected countries use mature quarantine systems that can ensure the number

of patients revealed reflects the actual situation there.

The doctor added that for arrivals from less-developed countries, such as India, the government should consider issuing travel alerts for the whole country at once.

Legislator Elizabeth Quat Pui-fan said these new measures were vital for Hong Kong to stop imported cases. She said the government had followed expert advice when making the decisions.

Gu Mengyan contributed to this story.

Overseas travel pushes virus tally to 120

By HE SHUSI in Hong Kong
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Hong Kong reported five new confirmed infections of the novel coronavirus on Tuesday — all linked to overseas travel — bringing the total number of such cases in the city to 120.

Two of the newly confirmed cases were close contacts of an 80-year-old patient who had returned on Feb 24 from a tour group of 21 people to India. Eight patients who are closely related to people from this group have been infected.

The patient's 52-year-old daughter was confirmed to be infected on Tuesday. She lives in

Block 28, Baguio Villa in western Hong Kong Island.

The family's 48-year-old domestic helper was also diagnosed with the disease on Tuesday. She started coughing on March 4.

Both cases developed signs of fever shortly before or after checking into a quarantine center as close contacts on Monday.

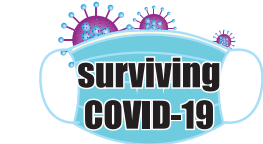
The other three cases were all linked to an eight-person tour group to Egypt, including a 59-year-old male worker of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department at a wet market in Tai Po. He last reported to work on Feb 26, before he joined the trip with his wife the following day.

5 the number of new infections reported on Tuesday, all of which were linked to overseas travel

health record, has had a fever since Saturday. They live in Siu Hei Court, Tuen Mun, and sought treatment on Monday.

Meanwhile, a 31-year-old female, who had recovered in Japan after leaving the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship, tested positive again on Tuesday, after returning to Hong Kong.

At a press briefing, the head of the Communicable Disease Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, Chuang Shuk-kwan, said the patient was a special case, as she has had a very low immune capacity for a long time. No similar cases have been identified so far, she said.



By WILLA WU in Hong Kong
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It could be a matter of life and death, and Liu Danhong wasn't sure how to put the question to the 20 Japanese bus drivers summoned to an urgent meeting.

Over 300 residents of Hong Kong and Macao were in limbo, stranded aboard the *Diamond Princess* in Yokohama Harbor in Tokyo, after a passenger who had disembarked from the ship tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

“Would you help transport my compatriots on the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship to the airport?” she finally asked. Liu, a Chinese expatriate in Japan, had hired these drivers over a span of 20 years.

The room felt silent, then suddenly buzzed. The risk of exposure to potential carriers of the coronavirus was on everyone's mind.

Three days before, Liu received a call from the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo. The embassy official asked if Liu could provide 15 buses to help the passengers break out of their confinement and come home.

Liu contacted three other bus companies and got a commitment for five

buses. But the offer was withdrawn on Feb 18, when the Japanese government announced that 542 of about 3,700 passengers and staff on board had come down with COVID-19, as the coronavirus spread quickly.

She could provide 15 buses. As she stood before her drivers that night, the pressing question was: Would anybody be willing to drive those buses?

The first flight chartered by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government was scheduled to take off 28 hours later.

“I was caught between two emotions. I wanted a ‘yes’ from them. But I didn't want them to become victims of the virus,” Liu said in a video interview with China Daily.

Fleet of buses departs

When the anxiety reached a climax, Liu saw a senior driver stand up. In his 50s, the driver said: “Our boss was among the first to offer help to Japanese people in the March 11 earthquake of 2011. This is our chance to do something in return.”

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck Japan, setting off a tsunami that wreaked havoc on the northeast coast and resulted in the world's second-worst nuclear



Liu Danhong (right) hands out protective gear in Yokohama Harbor, Japan, to drivers who agreed to transport Hong Kong residents stranded on the *Diamond Princess* to the airport. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

disaster after Chernobyl. Many had come to the aid of Japan, including many from China.

One, two, three. One after one, the drivers stood up and said yes. At the end of the meeting, 15 drivers had signed up for operation, with the oldest aged 64 while the youngest was 50.

“Beyond words,” she recalled.

The fleet of buses arrived at the Yokohama port at 4:30 pm on Feb 19.

Fukuda: China can be a ‘mentor’ in fighting epidemic

By ZHAO RUINAN in Hong Kong
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China has won high praise from Keiji Fukuda, former special adviser on pandemic influenza to the director-general of the World Health Organization, for its “tremendous” and “remarkable” experience in containing the novel coronavirus outbreak.

China could be a “mentor” for other countries battling the disease that has now spread to more than 100 countries and regions, the US epidemiologist said in an interview with China Daily.

“China's efforts have been more successful in slowing down the outbreak than what most people would have expected initially.”

China could be a “mentor” for other countries battling the disease that has now spread to more than 100 countries and regions, the US epidemiologist said in an interview with China Daily.

“China's efforts have been more successful in slowing down the outbreak than what most people would have expected initially. It has more experience in all related areas, including medical care for patients, epidemiological studies, control measures and surveillance measures,” said Fukuda, who now heads the Public Health School at the University of Hong Kong.

The coronavirus has continued to spread around the world, with Italy, Iran and South Korea among the worst hit.

Italy placed the whole country on lockdown on Tuesday after its confirmed cases reached 9,172 with 463 deaths on Monday —the highest tally outside China — while Iran had at least 8,000 infections. The total number of infections worldwide has topped 110,000, with some 30,000 cases outside China, according to the WHO.

With the epidemic rampaging, the WHO on Monday said the threat of the novel coronavirus outbreak developing into a pandemic “has become very real.”

Whatever we call it, Fukuda said, the pathogen has spread among communities in many countries. One thing that's clear is that the international community should take action together to fight it, he added.

To address global concerns, he said, every nation with the ability to help others shoulder its responsibilities, such as providing fund, medical supplies and offering the experience to countries in need.

China pledged on Saturday to donate \$20 million to the WHO to support the global fight against COVID-19, and has sent a team of medical experts and medical supplies to Iran. It has also donated medical supplies, including testing kits, masks and protective gowns, to virus-hit countries such as Japan, South Korea and Iran.

Fukuda said China's donation to the WHO is a “good example” for other countries, and called for more action to be taken globally.

Fukuda has more than two decades' experience in dealing with infectious diseases. Before joining the WHO, the professor had worked for the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,

“China's efforts have been more successful in slowing down the outbreak than what most people would have expected initially.”



Keiji Fukuda, former special adviser on pandemic influenza to the director-general of the WHO

Bio of Keiji Fukuda

- 2005-08: Scientist, coordinator and director of the Global Influenza Program, WHO
 - 2008-09: Assistant director-general for health security and environment ad interim, WHO
 - 2009-10: Special adviser on pandemic influenza to the director-general
 - 2010-15: Assistant director-general for health security
 - 2015-16: Special representative for antimicrobial resistance for the director-general
 - 2016-present: Director of the School of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong
- ZHAO RUINAN

during which he led the CDC field teams that helped Hong Kong during the avian influenza H5N1 outbreak in 1997. He had also worked closely with China on influenza surveillance, SARS and the H7N9 influenza.

He stressed that no nation will be spared and could fight COVID-19 alone, and the international community can help poorer nations significantly.

Many countries have so far tightened border controls to curb the spread of the virus, with bans on people from high-risk areas from entering.

In Fukuda's view, travel bans will gradually be less crucial, but practicing social distancing and strict personal hygiene will become more important in fighting the disease in the long run before vaccines can be developed. He expected vaccines to be available within one and a half years.

For the time being, he said, it's still difficult to draw a conclusion on the outbreak, adding that even the origin of the coronavirus remains unknown.

All these questions will remain unanswered until a full-scale assessment of the epidemic is made to better prepare the world for similar diseases.

A mission to evacuate the *Diamond Princess*

was Liu's idea. She has lived in Japan for 30 years, and shared their feelings about missing home.

“I am not good with words. But I was sure ‘Let's go home’ was the wish in every passenger's heart,” she said.

Japan's health ministry reported 414 Chinese were on board the *Diamond Princess* — 21 from the mainland, 364 from Hong Kong, five from Macao, and 24 from Taiwan.

Hong Kong passengers disembarked from the vessel around 10:30 pm on Feb 19. Several were seen taking selfies in front of the banner. In their faces, Liu saw happiness and excitement.

After transporting the first 106 Hong Kong passengers to Haneda Airport around midnight, the buses returned to base to be thoroughly disinfected. It was not until 7 am on Feb 20 that drivers could finally take a rest.

The 15 drivers worked shifts to complete the three-day evacuation that helped 188 Hong Kong passengers get back home.

No regrets

After the mission, the drivers volunteered to undergo quarantines in the office, instead of hotel rooms Liu offered to provide.

“They told me they would not like

to cost the company more money as they gathered the mission would hammer the company's business,” Liu said.

The concerns became reality. After words got out that Liu's buses had transported passengers aboard the *Diamond Princess*, 70 percent of her company's orders were canceled. She was diagnosed with mild depression after all the stress.

But Liu said she has no regrets about her decision. “I agreed to help and I intended to finish the mission,” she said.

On Saturday, Liu and the 15 drivers' test results for the virus came back negative.

Then, Liu and her colleagues were “surprised and moved” by the many gifts sent from China. “They thought they were just doing their jobs. They were so happy,” Liu said.

The Chinese is now working with her Japanese employees to get business back on track. Liu believes their bonds have strengthened, which could probably be said of the many Japanese and Chinese who weathered the outbreak together.



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