

**For information**  
**6 July 2009**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Security**

### **Review of Travel Alert and other Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Travelling Abroad**

#### **I. Introduction**

This paper briefs the Panel the results of the Government's review of the travel alert and other assistance to Hong Kong travellers and the 30 proposed enhancements.

2. Following the tsunami in South Asia in 2004, the Security Bureau (SB) formulated a three-tier "Contingency Plan for Emergency Response Operations outside the HKSAR" (ERO) for providing assistance to Hong Kong residents (HKR), whose personal safety is affected by sudden incidents outside Hong Kong. Under Tier One when the risk to personal safety is relatively low, the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) of the Immigration Department (ImmD) will provide assistance to the HKR. When the risk to personal safety becomes higher or if the scale of the required assistance expands, SB will activate ERO Tier Two. Together with other relevant bureaux and departments (b/ds), an inter-departmental coordinating team will oversee the assistance rendered to HKR. Where the incident has widespread impact on or poses significant threat to personal safety, SB may escalate to ERO Tier Three and activate the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre to monitor, support and coordinate the responses.

3. Owing to protest activities which led to the closure of the Bangkok International Airport from end November to early December 2008, a large number of overseas visitors were stranded in Bangkok. There were views that the Government should have made quicker decision to arrange chartered flights to bring back the stranded HKR. There were also calls for the Government to better prepare for arranging "chartered flights" or "chartered seats" should similar occasions arise again in future. Besides, despite SB had issued travel warnings in light of the developments of the unrest in Bangkok during the Easter holiday in April this year, some considered that the travel advices / warnings issued

by the Government should be made clearer and more standardized. The Government has pledged to review the arrangements.

## **II. Background**

4. Large-scale demonstrations had taken place from time to time in Bangkok and southern parts of Thailand since mid 2008, with the airport at Phuket closed from 29 to 31 August 2008. In August and September, ImmD's AHU received and handled dozens of requests for assistance. SB also issued travel advices on a continuous basis during this period, to remind HKR planning to visit Thailand to monitor developments.

5. The Bangkok International Airport was occupied by protesters and ceased operation in the evening of 25 November. On 26 November, SB updated its travel advice that HKR should avoid non-essential travel to Bangkok. SB activated ERO Tier Two on 27 November and set up an emergency coordination team (ECT) comprising representatives from ImmD, the Information Services Department (ISD), the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) and the Tourism Commission (TC). After noting that the Utapao military airport at Pattaya would be made available as an interim for commercial flights, ECT immediately liaised with the airline (Cathay Pacific Airways, CX) to arrange special flights to bring back HKR from Utapao. Between 28 and 30 November, CX and other airlines arranged a total of three to four special flights per day to bring back HKR from Utapao.

6. The situation in Bangkok deteriorated in the evening of 30 November. On 1 December, the Government announced to arrange chartered flights to expedite the bringing back of stranded HKR. On 1 and 2 December, a total of four flights were chartered. On 4 December, the Bangkok International Airport resumed operations gradually.

### Annex A

7. A chronology of the above incident is at **Annex A**. From 26 November to early December, AHU received a total of 969 requests for assistance. Except two cases which could not be followed up due to incorrect contact information, of the remaining assistance seekers:

- 515 made their own arrangement to return to Hong Kong;
- 241 took special flights through AHU's assistance to return to Hong Kong; and
- 211 took the Government's chartered flights to return.

8. The situation in Thailand became relatively stable afterwards, although protests still occurred from time to time. It however worsened again in April this year. There were large-scale anti-government demonstrations during the ASEAN Summit in Pattaya in mid-April. The Thai authorities declared on 11 and 12 April respectively that Pattaya and Bangkok and its surrounding areas were in a state of emergency.

9. SB had been closely monitoring the situation during this period (particularly given the Easter holiday is a popular period for travel), and sent Immigration Officers there. Moreover, we continuously updated our travel advice: 9 April - “pay close attention to the situation there and consider adjusting travel plans”; and 12 April - “avoid unnecessary travel to Bangkok”. In light of the large-scale and violent upheaval in the Bangkok city, we issued an explicit travel warning on 13 April - “strongly urge HKR not to go to Bangkok”. We also contacted local airlines and requested them to deploy larger aircraft to cater for those HKR who wished to return to Hong Kong early. Local tour operators cancelled the Thailand-bound tour groups from 13 to 28 April.

10. The Thailand authorities cancelled the state of emergency on 24 April in light of Bangkok’s latest situation. We lifted our travel warning on the same day, but since then have been continuing to closely monitor the situation in Thailand. Meanwhile, in response to calls from the public, we pledged to review our travel advice / warnings with a view to simplifying and standardizing their messages.

### **III. Proposed Enhancements**

11. We have conducted a comprehensive review of the mechanism to assist HKR overseas, in the light of the comments given by various parties. The key aspects of the review include the issuance of travel advice; AHU’s services; and the arrangements to bring back stranded HKR in case of emergency. Findings of our review and the proposed enhancements are outlined in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### ***(I) The Outbound Travel Alert System***

12. Internationally, there is no standard practice in issuing ‘travel advice’. Similar to our practice, some governments (e.g. Singapore) would issue travel advice on a need basis and in the form of press releases. There is no prescribed format and there is no specific

reference as to whether the statements constitute a ‘travel warning’ or ‘travel advice’. Other governments (e.g. Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) provide information on travel risk to other countries on their official websites.

13. All along, SB would, after assessing the threat in the place of incident, issue travel advice on a need basis. The main factors to be taken into consideration include:

- Level of threat to personal safety;
- Duration of the threat;
- Whether the threat is targeted at tourists; and
- Whether the place is visited by many HKR, including tour groups, individual tourists and visitors for business or visiting relatives.

In the assessment, we would obtain up-to-date information on the situation at the place of incident through various means, including the overseas Economic and Trade Offices of the HKSAR Government, Chinese Diplomatic and Consular Missions (CDCM) and the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR. We would also make reference to the travel risk information provided and travel alerts issued by other countries regarding the place of incident.

14. Take Thailand in last year for illustration, there were views that the public could not clearly comprehend the underlying threat and that the travel advice did not fully serve the intended alert purpose. We propose to institute an Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) System based on a simple colour code with standard key messages:

	<b>Amber</b>	<b>Red</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Scenario</b>	Signs of threat	Significant threat	Severe threat
<b>Key message</b>	Monitor situation; exercise caution	Adjust travel plans; avoid non-essential travel	Avoid all travel

In assessing the risk, the factors referred to in paragraph 13 will still be taken into account under the new system.

15. As the risk situations in each incident can differ, we are not able to make simple categorization about the circumstances under which we will issue a particular alert. We still need to assess the risk based on individual merits of the incident in question, before deciding to issue a colour alert. In general, where there are signs of threat in certain place which may affect the personal safety of HKR, we will, as a start, consider issuing Amber alert. In fact, most of the travel advice previously issued by SB could be classified as Amber alert under the new system. Take the recent situation in Thailand as example, our travel advice from mid-2008 to present would mostly be classified as Amber alert. In other words, HKR should monitor situation and exercise caution. During the periods when the Bangkok International Airport ceased operation in late 2008 and in the early Easter holiday this year (i.e. the period when Bangkok was declared to be in a state of emergency), the travel advice should be classified as Red alert. On 13 April this year, there were large-scale and violent confrontations in Bangkok, resulting in casualties. The required travel warning then should be classified as Black alert under the new system.

16. We will promulgate the colour alert through press releases and SB's webpage. Travel trade welcomes the new colour alert system and will facilitate its implementation, such as reminding their customers of the colour alert in force at the time of the latter's enquiries or ticket reservation.

17. In assessing the risk and considering outbound travel alerts, we will concentrate our resources on places visited by relatively more HKR. To facilitate the public to check the threats associated with travelling to other places, we will provide in our OTA webpage hyperlinks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China's webpage on outbound travel information. There will also be hyperlinks to other countries' (including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) travel risk webpage.

18. During the review, SB together with the relevant bureaux had exchanged views with the travel trade as well as the airlines and insurance sectors. In general, they agreed that the new system will provide clearer messages and facilitate the public's understanding of the risk to personal safety associated with the visit to a particular place. In terms of their operation, relevant trade and sectors will make the necessary orientation upon the implementation of the new system:

- Tour operators will coordinate as far as possible the arrangements for outbound tour group under different alert: in case of Black alert, all tours bound for the relevant place will be cancelled; in case of Red alert (i.e. the threat may be relatively localised or short-term), tour operators will decide whether to adjust the itineraries to avoid the place of incident or make other special arrangements. In any case, we encourage tour operators to explain to their customers their relevant arrangements so that the customers can get prepared.
- Airlines indicated that they generally have their own commercial considerations and mechanism to deal with ticket refund or flight postponement for different types of customers. Airlines will study and discuss with their customers the relevant arrangements in the light of the new system.
- The insurance sector will take into account the colour alerts in risk assessment and take corresponding measures as far as practicable. Tour operators and individual customers may choose, based on the level of risk they wish to bear, whether they would like to have insurance cover against the potential losses arising from changes in itinerary owing to a colour alert.

19. It is up to the relevant commercial entities to negotiate with their customers or individual travellers on the aforementioned commercial or contractual arrangements. In general, the relevant trades expressed that they will notify their customers of the relevant arrangements after studying the matters in greater detail. This is in line with the international practice, i.e. a government will issue travel alerts based on threat assessment and consideration of personal safety, and will not cause undue interference to commercial activities.

20. Under the new OTA system, whether or not to travel remains to be an individual's personal decision. However, we hope HKR would take heed to SB's travel alerts before travelling abroad and carefully consider whether to travel to a particular place or adjust their travel plans.

21. We will finalize the implementation details of the OTA System, with a view to launching the new webpage and other information database in September this year, and thus providing better service for HKR who plan to travel abroad. At the same time, the Department of

Health will continue to promulgate information on public hygienic situations overseas and related recommendations, based on the World Health Organization's advice and other relevant information.

## *(II) AHU's Services*

### *Training and Equipment*

22. ImmD will strengthen standby reinforcement teams, supported by officers with relevant skills (e.g. proficiency in foreign languages), and enhance training in emergency response management. ImmD will also deploy resources to upgrade its hardware (e.g. communication equipment).

### *'1868' overseas hotline service*

23. ImmD will improve the '1868' hotline and support services, including:

- Double the capacity of the '1868' hotline (23 to 46 lines);
- Add call recording, automatic call distribution and interactive voice response for queue position functions;
- Set up a case management system with functions such as logging case history and generating statistical reports; and
- Establish additional means of communication and emergency information dissemination (e.g. internet, mobile phone short message services (i.e. SMS) and emails).

### *Traveler e-network*

24. We will explore the feasibility of establishing an e-network to allow HKR to inform AHU their itinerary and emergency contact information (e.g. email address) etc before travelling abroad. When we issue a travel alert on the place they travel to, AHU can send them the relevant information by email. This proposal entails some technical issues. We will refer to the overseas experience and ascertain its viability. If proved viable, we will put in resources to upgrade our system and then launch the service.

### ***(III) Bringing Back Overseas HKR***

25. Generally speaking, when HKR encounter disruptions to their journey but their personal safety is not at risk, they should contact the airlines or travel agents. The latter are responsible for making appropriate arrangements to bring them back. However, if situations similar to the closure of the Bangkok International Airport in late 2008 occur, the Government will step in to coordinate. We have discussed and agreed with airlines to establish a mechanism. It aims to bring back HKR expeditiously when the situation so demands.

26. When the number of HKR requiring assistance is not large, the Government will request airlines to reserve certain number of seats on their existing flights to travellers referred by the AHU (“chartered seat” arrangement). If a larger number of HKR require assistance and the chartered seat arrangement cannot cater for the demand, the Government will arrange “chartered flight”. We have had discussions with local airlines on the arrangements (e.g. the number of “chartered seats”, lead time for “chartered flight” to be ready, arrangement to recover fee from passengers etc).

27. Furthermore, where necessary we will seek to cooperate with the Mainland authorities (in particular when the Mainland will also arrange chartered flights), so as to use Mainland’s flights to bring back HKR. The Mainland authorities reverted that they would actively work together with the HKSAR Government on any emergency responses, including arranging special flights for HKR if necessary.

28. It is worth mentioning that there is no direct linkage between the decision to charter flights / seats and the colour alert. The former primarily depends on whether existing flights can meet demand and effectively bring back stranded HKR despite the special circumstances. The travel alert system is on the other hand premised on the relevant incidents and their entailing risk to or impact on personal safety.

### ***(IV) Improvements to ERO and Resources***

#### *Enhancements to ERO*

29. ERO provides for a three-tier response system, ensuring inter-departmental coordination and an upgraded command structure to



tackle different levels of emergency. We will incorporate the OTA System in ERO as background. Other enhancements to the ERO include:

- ISD, THB and TC will become ECT's standing members. Other b/ds, commercial operators or trade representatives will be invited to participate on a need basis;
- Relevant parties will assign dedicated contact points under the emergency plan and arrange regular trainings to them so as to strengthen emergency response and coordination, both within and outside the Government;
- After activation of Tier Two and Tier Three response, ECT or the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre will (through SB) submit regular situation reports to the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office and the Chief Executive's Office; and
- After activation of Tier Two response or above, AHU will assess the feasibility and effectiveness of deploying Immigration Officers to the relevant place so as to make direct liaison with CDCM, obtain on-ground information and provide support to HKR.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

30. Overseas travel is very popular among HKR. The implementation of the recommended enhancements will strengthen the Government's capability in providing effective and efficient assistance to HKR overseas.

31. We proposed a total of 30 enhancement measures after the review (as detailed at **Annex B**). Among them, some 20 were already in place or can be implemented in the short term. Others will be gradually implemented after confirming their feasibility and securing the necessary resources.

Annex B

**Demonstration Activities in Thailand in 2008 –**

**Chronology of the Government’s Response**

**Situation of Hong Kong residents’ (HKR) request for assistance**

**Action taken by the Government**

**August to November 2008**

- Demonstrations occurred in Bangkok and southern parts of Thailand in late August. The Phuket airport was closed from 29 to 31 August.
- Bangkok was declared to be in a state of emergency from 2 to 14 September.

- The “1868 hotline” received 29 requests for assistance from 30 August to 3 September, seeking information and assistance due to the closure of Phuket airport.

- Security Bureau (SB) issued travel advice on a daily basis from 31 August to 16 September, reminding HKR to “pay attention to personal safety, keep themselves up-to-date on developments there and avoid large gatherings of people or places of demonstrations.”
- Immigration Department (ImmD) followed up the requests for assistance with the travel trade, airlines and Chinese Diplomatic and Consular Missions (CDCM) in Thailand. Majority of the callers made their own arrangements to return to Hong Kong (HK) after being given information on relevant flight schedules. All cases were resolved by 4 September.
- SB updated the travel advice, appealing HKR to “consider adjusting or postponing their travel plans.”

- The situation in Thailand flared up again in early October. There were attacks in the southern parts of the country.

**25 November**

- Protesters occupied the Bangkok International Airport (BIA) in the evening. BIA's operation was affected.

**26 November**

- BIA was closed.

**27 November**

- Thailand Government announced in the afternoon that BIA would not be re-opened within short period. The Utapao military airport (Utapao) in Pattaya could be made available in the interim for use by civilian aircrafts.

- Since 7 October, SB updated travel advice on a daily basis to remind HKR planning to visit Thailand to "keep themselves abreast of the situation there. Those who were already in Thailand should attend to their personal safety and avoid places of demonstrations or large gatherings of people."

- ImmD contacted the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR (OCMFA) and CDCM in Thailand to obtain up-to-date information and assessment of the situation.

- Received seven requests for assistance to return to HK.

- SB revised the travel advice, recommending HKR to "avoid unnecessary travel to Bangkok".

- Received 12 requests for assistance.

- ImmD explained to callers that the Government was coordinating with airlines with a view to bringing back HKR from Pattaya.

- The emergency coordinating team (ECT), comprising representatives from SB, ImmD, Transport and Housing Bureau (THB), Tourism Commission, etc. was formed to coordinate contingency measures to facilitate HKR's return via Utapao.

- Travel trade estimated that 27 tour groups, comprising 640 members, plus some 1 000 individual travellers were in Bangkok.

**28 November**

- Travel trade told the press in the morning that airlines would soon announce to deploy special flights to bring back HKR.

- ECT contacted the Cathay Pacific Airways (CX). The latter undertook to check and assess the situation at Utapao, provide information on the number of aircrafts it could deploy and the relevant seating capacity, and work out the plan to bring back stranded HKR<sup>1</sup>. THB subsequently contacted another local airline (Hong Kong Express) on 28 November.

- CX replied to ECT in the morning that it agreed to arrange special flights to Utapao at least on 28 and 29 November, despite the operational situation and capacity available at Utapao still remained unclear.
- The first CX special flight departed for Utapao in the morning. Two Immigration Officers were on board to provide assistance to HKR on the scene.
- The Government and CX made joint announcement on the special flight arrangement in the afternoon.

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<sup>1</sup> Later, CX discussed with the tour agents on the arrangement of bringing back tour group members in an orderly manner by special flights.

- Three special flights arrived in HK from Utapao<sup>2</sup> at night and in early morning on the next day, bringing back over 500 passengers (including 280 tour group members):
  - Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)
  - Oriental Thai  
(168 seats)
  - HK Express  
(164 seats)

- Received 213 requests for assistance. Callers mainly inquired information on the means for them to contact the relevant airlines and confirm the return seats.
- Due to the surge in enquiries, many could not get through the “1868” or airline hotlines in the first instance.

- According to the crew members’ report of the first special flight of CX arrived at Utapao, the passenger facilities at the airport were severely inadequate. The takeoff/landing rights could only be confirmed at a very late stage, resulting in much delay. CX considered it necessary to re-assess the special flight arrangement on 29 November, subject to the situation report to be available after the return of that first special flight in the evening.
- On the assessment that a large number of individual travellers needed the special flight service, ECT indicated to CX the urgent need to continue with the special flight arrangement on a daily basis until 1 December at least.
- CX confirmed in the early morning that a special flight would depart for Utapao in the afternoon. As the airport situation was still chaotic, CX would confirm the arrangement for further special flights only upon the return and report of situation by that special flight.

**29 November**

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<sup>2</sup> The three special flights were among the first batch of special flights departed from Pattaya.

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|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Mainland authorities arranged chartered flights to bring back Mainland residents to Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.</li><li>• Four special flights arrived in HK from the afternoon to early morning on the next day, bringing back 1000 passengers (including 240 tour group members):<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➢ <u>Cathay Pacific</u> (385 seats)</li><li>➢ <u>HK Express</u> (164 seats)</li><li>➢ <u>Oriental Thai</u> (168 seats)</li><li>➢ <u>Thai Airways</u> (305 seats)</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Received 398 requests for assistance.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ECT contacted the OCMFA and secured the agreement for HKR in need to take the Mainland chartered flight to Guangzhou.<sup>3</sup></li><li>• Over 1 500 passengers took the special flights of the two days to return to HK. Taking into account the number of new requests for assistance, ECT estimated that there might still be 1 000 HKR stranded in Thailand. ECT considered that continuation of the special flights for two more days should clear the outstanding demand.</li></ul> |
|--|---|---|

**30 November**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dragonair arranged additional and larger aircrafts (capacity doubled from 150 to 300) to operate the Phuket route to assist in bringing back stranded HKR in Thailand.</li><li>• Another four special flights arrived in HK at night and in the early morning on 1 December, bringing back over 1 000 passengers. All tour group members had returned to HK by then.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Representatives from ECT and CX conducted a press conference in the afternoon to report on progress of arranging special flights and the arrangements for that day and the next day. They also briefed the media on the progress of bringing back tour groups and other HKR, and explained the chaotic situation at the Utapao airport and the practical difficulties in arranging more special flights.</li></ul> |
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<sup>3</sup> The Mainland residents taking the chartered flights were mostly tour group members. They needed to pay for the full ticket fee. Due to the limited capacity and that some HKR were not willing to pay for the full ticket fee, only 23 HKR took the chartered flight to return to HK via Guangzhou. The Guangdong Office of the HKSAR Government provided transportation and immigration assistance to those returning passengers.

- Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)
- Thai Airways  
(375 seats)
- NokAir  
(150 seats)
- Oriental Thai  
(168 seats)
- The situation in Bangkok deteriorated as violent confrontation among rival groups of protesters occurred in the downtown in the evening.
- Received 143 requests for assistance. A number of individual travellers expressed difficulties in securing seats of the special flights.
- From 26 to 30 November, a total of 773 requests for assistance were received. Among them, 259 had returned to HK. For the remaining some 500 cases, it was estimated that about half of them had not secured seats of the special flights.

**1 December**

- Three special flights returned to HK in the evening and at night, bringing back over 900 passengers:
  - Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)
  - Thai Airways  
(375 seats)
  - Oriental Thai  
(168 seats)
- Received 65 requests for assistance.
- Due to the deterioration of the situation in Bangkok and the fact that some individual travellers had expressed difficulties in securing seats for returning to HK, the Secretary for Security (S for S) instructed ECT to report and propose to the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS) in the morning meeting to arrange chartered flights to expedite the return of stranded HKR. CS instructed to also request, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Thai authorities to grant the HKSAR Government more takeoff/landing rights to operate the chartered flights. The Thai authorities acceded to the request later in the day.
- ECT approached CX and HK Express. Both confirmed

- Two chartered flights departed for Utapao at night and arrived in HK in the early morning on the next day, bringing back 81 passengers:
  - Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)  
(Brought back 71 passengers)
  - HK Express  
(164 seats)  
(Brought back 10 passengers)

**2 December**

- Three special flights arrived in HK in the evening and at night, bringing back 900 passengers:
  - Oriental Thai  
(168 seats)
  - Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)
  - Thai Airways  
(375 seats)
- Two chartered flights

that they would take up the additional takeoff/landing rights and arrange chartered flights. Detail arrangements were also worked out for “1868” to call back and inform the HKR callers.

- ECT announced at noon the decision to charter flights. Information on the chartered flight arrangement was disseminated through various means (such as contacting the HKR who had requested assistance individually, SMS, the “1868” hotline, uploading the information on ImmD’s website and announcing through radio and TV).
- Four Immigration Officers went to Bangkok and Utapao to reinforce the support. The travel trade also provided assistance (such as disseminating the chartered flight information in hotels in Thailand).
- Received 105 requests for assistance.
- Continue to disseminate the chartered flight arrangement for the day through various means.
- S for S attended LegCo Panel on Security to explain the measures taken and the progress of bringing back HKR. S for S also pledged to review the mechanism for providing assistance to HKR overseas.



arrived in HK, bringing back 130 passengers:

- HK Express  
(164 seats)  
(Brought back 89 passengers)
  
- HK Express  
(164 seats)  
(Brought back 41 passengers)

**3 December**

- Three special flights arrived in HK, bringing back over 900 passengers:
  - Cathay Pacific  
(385 seats)
  - Thai Air Asia  
(180 seats)
  - Thai Airways  
(375 seats)
- Received 26 requests for assistance.
- Majority of those who had requested assistance through “1868” had returned to HK. The Government stopped the chartered flight arrangement but continued to assist the other HKR to make use of airlines’ special flights to return to HK.

**4 December**

- It was announced that BIA would gradually resume operation.
- No new requests for assistance.

**5 December**

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| • BIA resumed full operation. | • No new requests for assistance.<br><br>• 969 requests for assistance were received since 26 November: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ 515 assistance seekers made their own arrangements to return to HK.</li><li>➤ 241 took airlines' special flights through ImmD's assistance (including the 23 persons who took the Mainland chartered flight to return to HK via Guangzhou).</li><li>➤ 211 took the chartered flights arranged by the Government.<sup>4</sup></li><li>➤ The remaining 2 cases were untraceable due to information errors.</li></ul> |
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- End -

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<sup>4</sup> As at 30 June 2009, 159 had paid for the relevant discount ticket fee. The Government is still pursuing the outstanding cases (but information on some of the relevant persons is incomplete, rendering it difficult to follow up).

**Recommended Enhancements**

**Outbound Travel Alert (OTA)**

**Timeframe  
for delivery**

- |    |   |                  |
|----|---|------------------|
| 1. | To adopt a three-colour OTA system.   | Short-term       |
| 2. | To promote public awareness on the new system.  | Short-term       |
| 3. | To encourage the travel trade to remind its customers the prevailing colour alerts.   | Short-term       |
| 4. | To update the Security Bureau's and other relevant webpages to make them more user-friendly.  | Short-term       |
| 5. | To add in the OTA webpage hyperlinks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' webpage on tips on travelling to other countries; and to the webpages of some other places (including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) on travel risks. | Short-term       |
| 6. | To add in the OTA webpage a hyperlink to the Department of Health's Travel Health Service webpage.  | Short-term       |
| 7. | To add in the OTA webpage a hyperlink to the webpage of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit (AHU) of the Immigration Department.   | Short-term       |
| 8. | To enhance liaison with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong to draw reference to the Mainland authorities' travel risk assessment on overseas places.  | Already in place |

**AHU's Services**

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|-----|--|------------|
| 9.  | To provide staff training on crisis management and the handling of victims and assistance seekers. | Short-term |
| 10. | To form stand-by / reinforcement teams and provide training to members.                            | Short-term |

## Annex B

- |     |   |             |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 11. | To provide frontline staff with working kits containing briefing materials and points-to-note.  | Short-term  |
| 12. | To identify suitable officers and state in the staff deployment list their relevant skills (e.g. proficiency in foreign language).  | Short-term  |
| 13. | To increase the means to communicate and disseminate emergency information, such as internet, SMS, email etc.   | Medium-term |
| 14. | To study the feasibility and effectiveness of the service to allow Hong Kong residents (HKR) planning to travel abroad to inform AHU their itineraries, contact information (e.g. email address), etc. via the electronic network, such that, in case they have travelled to a place where a colour alert is in force, AHU could keep them informed of the relevant OTA information by email. | Medium-term |
| 15. | To procure suitable communication equipment.  | Medium-term |
| 16. | To increase the capacity of the '1868' hotline (23 to 46 lines).  | Long-term   |
| 17. | To add for the '1868' hotline the automatic call distribution and related queuing functions.  | Long-term   |
| 18. | To add for the '1868' hotline the recording facilities.   | Long-term   |
| 19. | To add for the '1868' hotline the function of playing important announcements and the interactive voice response function to inform the callers their queue positions.  | Long-term   |
| 20. | To enhance the controlling functions of the '1868' hotline system, such as adding a computerized case management system for the classification of case information and compilation of statistical reports, call logs and related functions, and alarm function to alert supervisors the occupation of phone lines.  | Long-term   |

### **Means to Bring back HKR**

- |     |  |            |
|-----|--|------------|
| 21. | To have standing arrangements with local airlines on 'chartering seats' / 'chartering flights', with a view to speeding up the return of HKR in case of emergency. | Short-term |
|-----|--|------------|

22. To discuss with the Mainland authorities to make use of the Mainland's special flights to bring back HKR where the circumstances so warrant. Short-term

**Contingency Plan for Emergency Response Operations (ERO) and Resources**

23. To add the OTA system in the ERO as background information. Short-term
24. Once the ERO Tier Two or above is activated, AHU to promptly assess the feasibility and effectiveness of deploying officers to the relevant place. Already in place
25. To submit situation reports regularly to the Chief Executive and the Chief Secretary for Administration once the ERO Tier Two or Three is activated. Already in place
26. To add the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Tourism Commission as standing members of the Emergency Coordinating Team (ECT). Already in place
27. To co-opt other bureaux/departments and trade representatives as ECT members on a need basis. Already in place
28. To assign dedicated contact persons of all departments and relevant parties on emergency situations, so as to enhance the coordination mechanism and effectiveness both within and outside the Government. Short-term
29. To arrange regular training for relevant staff. Short-term
30. To explore setting up a provision for emergency responses or making other arrangements, so as to ensure the required resources for the special measures to assist HKR overseas (like chartered flights etc.) could be secured in the first instance. Long-term

- Ends -