

CHP investigates additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases by nucleic acid tests and rapid antigen tests as well as 15 imported cases earlier involving Omicron mutant strain sub-lineages

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 21) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, May 21, the CHP was investigating 103 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (40 confirmed cases, 56 asymptomatic cases and seven cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 125 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RATs) (80 symptomatic cases and 45 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 761 128 and 449 031 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 16 imported cases (14 cases and two cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively). The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

Meanwhile, whole genome sequencing analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that two, three and 10 earlier imported cases were found to carry the sub-lineages BA.4, BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1 under the Omicron mutant strain respectively. The BA.4 cases involve a 52-year-old male who arrived in Hong Kong from Mexico on May 17 and a 22-year-old male who arrived in Hong Kong from the United Kingdom on the same day. Both of them tested positive on arrival. The BA.2.12 cases involve two males and one female aged 21 to 69 who arrived in Hong Kong from Canada and the United States during the period from May 16 to 17. All of them tested positive on arrival. The BA.2.12.1 cases involve five males and five females aged 20 to 44 who arrived in Hong Kong from the United States, Singapore, Australia, Israel and India during the period from May 11 to 18. Nine cases tested positive on arrival, while the remaining case tested positive during compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel. Together with the above new cases, Hong Kong has recorded a total of 11 imported cases with BA.4, 10 imported cases with BA.2.12 and 56 imported cases with BA.2.12.1.

In addition, as of 0.00am, May 21, a total of 9 157 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded (i.e. no new reported cases), with 9 079 and 75 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 370

death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Furthermore, among the earlier cases by nucleic acid tests reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (May 20), the total number of confirmed cases was 331 910, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 198 558, 23 and 230 534 respectively.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that as the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings. This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹â€‹The spokesman reminded that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They can provide effective protection to those vaccinated in preventing serious complications and even death after infection. People who have yet to receive vaccination, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, should get vaccinated as early as possible for self-protection and to reduce the risk of falling seriously ill and death should they get infected.

Hospital Authority announces positive patient cases detected via admission screening or testing and clusters of nosocomial COVID-19 infections

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority today (May 21) announced information regarding patients who tested positive via admission screening or testing with patients or staff members identified as close contacts and nosocomial COVID-19 infection cases:

The following are the statistics of clusters of nosocomial infection cases in public hospitals:

Hospital/clinic	Number of patients who tested positive	Number of staff members who tested positive
North Lantau Hospital	1	–

Thorough cleaning and disinfection operations have been performed in the affected areas by the hospital. The hospital will continue to closely monitor the health condition of patients and staff members, and communicate with the Centre for Health Protection on the latest situation.

There have been no patients who tested positive via admission screening or by testing in public hospitals with patients or staff members identified as close contacts reported in public hospitals today.

[Update on supplies from Mainland](#)

The Task Force of Supplies from the Mainland led by the Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has been working closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government to explore various means to stabilise the supply of goods from the Mainland to Hong Kong. In addition to road transport arrangements, transportation of goods by water and railway is already in service.

A spokesperson for the THB said that the "Sea Express" water transportation service from the Mainland to Hong Kong has been fully launched and its capacity is rising to increase the supplies of fresh food, other daily necessities and manufacturing materials. The current supply of fresh food from the Mainland is stable.

Currently, there are three water transportation routes between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, namely (1) from Shenzhen Yantian International Container Terminals to Hong Kong Kwai Tsing Container Terminals (KTCT); (2) from Shenzhen DaChan Bay Terminals to KTCT; and (3) from China Merchants Port (South China) Management Center (Shenzhen Mawan, Shekou and Chiwan Container Terminals) to Hong Kong River Trade Terminal and elsewhere. Together with the water transportation routes from other cities in Guangdong Province, including the routes from Guangzhou Lianhuashan Port, Nansha Port, Huadu Port, Zhongshan Huangpu Port and Zhuhai Doumen Port to different terminals in Hong Kong, the water transport capacity amounts to tens of thousands of tonnes daily.

The spokesperson said today (May 21) that Shenzhen operated 67 cargo vessel trips and transported around 6 250 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of cross-boundary supplies by water yesterday (May 20), equivalent to about 22 460 tonnes of goods, of which around 20 TEUs (about 170 tonnes) were fresh food and around 6 230 TEUs (about 22 290 tonnes) were non-fresh food,

according to information from the Mainland authorities.

Since the launch of services from the three ports in Shenzhen since February 18 to yesterday, a total of around 392 790 TEUs of cross-boundary supplies have been transported, equivalent to about 1 994 600 tonnes of goods, of which around 1 720 TEUs (about 14 750 tonnes) were fresh food and around 391 070 TEUs (about 1 979 850 tonnes) were non-fresh food.

As for rail cargo, mainly anti-epidemic supplies are being transported at the moment. Six TEUs with a total of 10 tonnes of goods were transported to Hong Kong yesterday. Since its launch on March 2 and up to yesterday, more than 1 520 tonnes of goods including anti-epidemic supplies such as COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits and protective gowns were transported to Hong Kong.

To further ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong through land transport, a trial run of cargo transfer was conducted by the THB at a yard situated on Kam Pok Road, San Tin, Yuen Long, and it was completed smoothly. The THB will continue to work with the Mainland authorities to fully take forward cargo transfer arrangements on the Hong Kong side. It is a contingency measure in response to the latest epidemic situation in the city so as to reduce the risk of epidemic transmission in both the Mainland and Hong Kong, ensuring both smooth cross-boundary land transport and a stable goods supply to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, to avoid a spillover of the epidemic, the Transport Department (TD) has arranged for dedicated staff to conduct RATs for cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers at various land boundary control points (BCPs) from February 28 onwards. Only drivers with a negative result are allowed to enter the Mainland. In order to further improve the accuracy of the tests, the TD has already switched to use rapid nucleic acid tests at the BCPs. Starting from April 21, the sampling method for rapid nucleic acid tests has been further changed to nasopharyngeal swabs. A total of 3 080 rapid nucleic acid tests were conducted yesterday in which 16 drivers preliminarily tested positive. The TD has passed the cases to the Department of Health for follow-up.

The THB will closely monitor the situation and co-operate with the Mainland authorities to facilitate and implement various measures to ensure a stable goods supply to Hong Kong, with a view to complementing the supply through road, water and railway transport, enhancing capacity and efficiency as well as optimising the flow of cross-boundary supplies.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected](#)

dangerous drugs (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 20) seized about 330 grams of suspected crack cocaine, about 200g of suspected ketamine, about 6g of suspected nimetazepam and about 100g of cookies suspected of containing tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) with a total estimated market value of about \$620,000 in Sha Tin.

During an anti-narcotics operation conducted in Sha Tin yesterday evening, Customs officers intercepted a man and raided a hotel room rented by him. The batch of suspected dangerous drugs and a batch of drug packaging paraphernalia were seized. The 23-year-old man was then arrested.

An investigation is ongoing.

Under the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (DDO), trafficking in a dangerous drug is a serious offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$5 million and life imprisonment.

Customs reminds members of the public that THC is classified as dangerous drugs under the DDO. Importation of products containing THC into Hong Kong is prohibited unless the relevant provisions in the DDO are complied with. In order to avoid breaching the law inadvertently, special attention should be paid to the packaging labels of relevant products.

Members of the public may report any suspected drug trafficking activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



Government makes “restriction-testing

declaration" and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Block 23A, South Horizons, Ap Lei Chau

â€‹The Government today (May 21) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 5pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Ap Lei Chau (i.e. Block 23A (Mei Ka Court), South Horizons, Ap Lei Chau, excluding the kindergarten and car park below the podium level, see Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at around noon tomorrow (May 22). The operation may be extended depending on test results.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. Having reviewed a basket of factors, including the viral load in sewage, the information of relevant positive cases, and other circumstantial factors, and conducted a risk assessment, the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 11.30pm today. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will make arrangement to facilitate specimen collection for people with impaired mobility. All persons in the "restricted area" who have tested positive in the past 14 days, including positive cases identified either by nucleic acid tests recorded by the Department of Health (DH) or by rapid antigen tests that have been self-declared to the DH, are not required to undergo testing in this compulsory testing exercise.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the

exercise at around noon tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

According to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any persons other than those specified above who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from May 15 to 21, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before May 23, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$10,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for six months.