

CHP investigates additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases by nucleic acid tests and rapid antigen tests as well as 11 imported cases earlier involving Omicron mutant strain sub-lineages BA.4 and BA.2.12.1

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 19) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, May 19, the CHP was investigating 116 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (30 confirmed cases, 74 asymptomatic cases and 12 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 175 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RATs) (97 symptomatic cases and 78 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 760 924 and 448 764 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 38 imported cases (34 cases and four 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 one and 10 earlier imported cases were found to carry the sub-lineages BA.4 and BA.2.12.1 under the Omicron mutant strain respectively. The BA.4 case involves a 27-year-old female who arrived in Hong Kong from South Africa on May 15 who tested positive on arrival. The BA.2.12.1 cases involve five males and five females aged 19 to 67, who arrived in Hong Kong from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Qatar during the period from May 9 to 15. Nine cases tested positive on arrival while the remaining one tested positive during compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel. Together with the above new cases, Hong Kong has recorded a total of nine imported cases with BA.4 and 35 imported cases with BA.2.12.1. No cases of the sub-lineages have been found in the local community so far, and the CHP will continue to closely monitor the latest developments.

In addition, as of 0.00am, May 19, a total of 9 153 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 9 075 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 9 366 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 18), the total number of confirmed cases was 331 811, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 198 455, 23 and 230 519 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.

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.

[Latest service arrangements for Accident and Emergency Departments](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (May 19) that, in view of the latest stabilised epidemic situation and the increasing service demand, the Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments of Tin Shui Wai Hospital (TSWH), Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) and North Lantau Hospital (NLTH) will resume normal services gradually from tomorrow (May 20).

The HA spokesperson said, "A&E Departments adopt a triage system, under which priority for services will be given to patients with more severe conditions. To alleviate the pressure on the services of A&E Departments, other patients are advised to attend consultation at general out-patient clinics or general practitioner clinics."

In response to the epidemic, the A&E Departments of TSWH, QEH and NLTH have implemented special arrangements earlier to admit patients only in emergency medical condition.

The HA thanked members of the public for their understanding on the special arrangements implemented in the A&E Departments of the three hospitals earlier and expressed its gratitude to healthcare staff, the Fire Services Department and other government departments for their co-operation and assistance.

CFS finds malachite green in eel sample

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (May 19) announced that malachite green was found in an eel sample. Follow-up is in progress.

A CFS spokesman said, "The CFS collected the above-mentioned eel sample from a fresh provision shop in Tung Chung for testing when following up on a related incident. The test result showed that the sample contained malachite green at a level of 2.8 parts per billion."

The spokesman said that the CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed the vendor to stop sale of the affected product. The CFS is also tracing the source and distribution of the product concerned. Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be instituted.

Malachite green is a type of industrial dye and has been used for treating infections in fish. Currently, malachite green has been prohibited for use in food-producing animals in many countries. According to the Harmful Substances in Food Regulations (Cap. 132AF), no food sold in Hong Kong is allowed to contain malachite green. Offenders will be prosecuted and will be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and to imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The CFS will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and

appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (May 19) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department have been collecting sewage samples for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in some areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 195 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Kwai Tsing District – Shek Yam Estate, Shek Yam East Estate, Ning Fung Court and On Yam Estate
- Kowloon City District – Harbourfront Landmark and Laguna Verde (The Greenwood, Villa Verde, Costa Del Sol, Laguna Grande and Ocean Vista)
- Yuen Long District – Hung Fuk Estate, Tin Sam Villa, Sha Chau Lei Tsuen, Casa De Oro, Parkview Garden, Shek Po Tsuen, San Lee Uk Tsuen, Sheffield Villas, Tak Cheung Building and Tak Hing Building

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose of them properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document

and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

[Chief Executive-elect continues to meet with legislators \(with photos\)](#)

The Chief Executive-elect, Mr John Lee, has continued to meet with Legislative Council (LegCo) Members to facilitate exchange and interaction. He met with legislators from the New People's Party today (May 19) to gauge their views on the new-term Government in a wide range of issues including district management, fighting the epidemic, financial development and tourism.

During the meeting, Mr Lee thanked the participants for their views. He also talked about the proposed reorganisation of the government structure, saying that the proposals would ensure clearer policy ownership across bureaux, generate greater synergies and enhance co-ordination and leadership with an aim of strengthening the Government's governance efficiency and outcomes.

He added that a representative of the Office of the Chief Executive-elect would attend the meeting of the LegCo's Subcommittee to Study the Proposal for Reorganising the Government Structure and Related Matters tomorrow (May 20) to explain the proposal in detail and address legislators' questions and comments.

Mr Lee said he hoped that the proposals would be supported by LegCo Members and that the relevant legislative and funding procedures could be completed by mid-June, so that the new government structure could take effect on July 1.

