

HAD distributes complimentary COVID-19 rapid test kits to Sha Tin District, Tai Po District and Yau Tsim Mong District residents (with photos)

In the light of the positive test results for the COVID-19 virus from some sewage samples collected in Sha Tin, Tai Po and Mong Kok, the Home Affairs Department (including the Sha Tin District Office (STD0), the Tai Po District Office (TPDO) and the Yau Tsim Mong District Office (YTMD0)) today (January 31) started to distribute a total of about 61 000 COVID-19 rapid test kits to residents within the districts.

The STD0 and the TPDO today distributed a total of around 41 000 rapid test kits to households in Sha Tin District and Tai Po District through property management companies. The YTMD0 also started to distribute about 20 000 rapid test kits to residents in Yau Tsim Mong District through district bodies, building organisations and associations of ethnic minorities today, in the hope of identifying infected persons early so as to better protect the infected persons and their families. However, the Government stresses that rapid test kit testing is not a substitute for the Government's compulsory testing requirement.

For more information on the use of the rapid test kits, residents may refer to the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjLzD3-gab4>

The Government appeals for the co-operation of members of the public to safeguard the health of themselves and their families by undergoing testing on a voluntary basis and fighting the virus together. The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or had contact with cases that tested positive), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons to reduce the transmission risks of COVID-19.



Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (January 31), 28 patients who had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus (case numbers: 12797, 12865, 12880, 12890, 12909, 12910, 12916, 12941, 12969, 12976, 12989, 12995, 12997, 13008, 13014, 13024, 13034, 13042, 13046, 13047, 13068, 13081, 13086, 13106, 13120, 13124, 13160 and 13161) were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. Since case 13144 has been deleted by the Department of Health, so far a total of 12 780 patients have been discharged.

A total of 1 031 patients who had tested positive are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre, the Community

Treatment Facility at AsiaWorld-Expo and 13 public hospitals. All of them are in stable condition.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

CHP investigates 66 confirmed and 26 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 38 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 31) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 31, the CHP was investigating 66 additional confirmed cases and 26 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 92 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours), while an earlier tested positive case (case 13845) turned out to be a re-positive case after investigation. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 745 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 443 and nine respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 14 197 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 12 imported cases, 13 local cases and 67 cases epidemiologically linked with previous cases. Eighty-two of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of nine cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining case is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 44 males and 48 females, aged 11-month-old to 87. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk). Case status and classification may be subject to changes when there is new information available during epidemiological investigation and latest information is shown on "COVID-19 Thematic Website".

As at 4pm today, a total of 1 064 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 17 to 30). Six-hundred-and-twenty-nine of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related, 67 are local cases, 183 are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest are imported cases.

Separately, to stop the potential risk of further spread of the virus, the CHP has arranged/will arrange the residents concerned of the following buildings, where cases suspectedly related to environmental factors (including vertical/horizontal transmission and adjacent yard area) were detected, to undergo quarantine at quarantine centre:

- Ming Lai House, Choi Wan (II) Estate, Wong Tai Sin (involving three cases at three units on 10th floor and five cases at four units of room 15 on different floors (including one of the aforementioned case at a unit on 10th floor)): residents of rooms 14 and 15 on all floors, and rooms 13 and 17 on 10th floor;
- On Kwai House, Kwai Fuk Court, Kwai Chung (involving ten cases at three units of room 08 on different floors): residents of room 08 on all floors;
- Kwai Yan House, Kwai Fong Estate, Kwai Chung (involving six cases at three units on 14th floor and four cases at two units of room 06 on different floors (including three of the aforementioned cases at a unit on 14th floor)): residents of rooms 01 to 12 on 14th floor, and rooms 06 on 15th to 20th floors;
- Tsui Wo House, Tai Wo Estate, Tai Po (involving two cases at two units of room 25 on different floors and four cases at two units of room 26 on different floors): residents of room 25 on 24th to 35th floors and room 26 on 23rd to 35th floors;
- Hong Tim House, Tsz Hong Estate, Tsz Wan Shan (involving five cases at two units of room 06 on different floors): residents of room 06 on 1st to 6th floors.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13336 to 13338, 13344, 13347, 13349, 13351, 13352, 13356, 13357, 13364 to 13366, 13369, 13377, 13384, 13386, 13387, 13389, 13395, 13396, 13398, 13438, 13451, 13525, 13566, 13592, 13613, 13620, 13623, 13680, 13689, 13690, 13698, 13717, 13755, 13759 and 13788 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 774 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for cases with mutant strains, persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

The CHP strongly reminded members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. The Government will seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices commits an offence and

may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. 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 order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months. Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). The Government reiterates that the aim of issuing a compulsory testing notice is to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community as soon as possible to protect overall public health and safety.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that the global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility. With the higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with the recently tightened social distancing measures, and to refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gatherings (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

[Government adjusts quarantine and testing requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from Mainland, Macao and Taiwan](#)

The Government announced today (January 31) that from February 5, the COVID-19 nucleic acid testing arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from the Mainland and Macao will be adjusted. The compulsory quarantine period for inbound travellers from Taiwan will also be adjusted to 14 days in designated quarantine hotels (DQHs), followed by a seven-day self-monitoring period.

Testing arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in the Mainland and Macao

From February 5, for persons who arrive at Hong Kong on or after January 18 and have only stayed in the Mainland or Macao on the day of arrival at

Hong Kong or during the 14 days before that day, regardless of whether they are arriving via land boundary control points or the airport, the corresponding compulsory testing arrangements will be adjusted to three tests to be conducted on the third, fifth and 12th days of their arrival at Hong Kong. Among these, the test on the 12th day must be conducted in a community testing centre (CTC). This arrangement is applicable to persons who arrive at Hong Kong under the Return2hk Scheme and the Come2hk Scheme and are thus exempted from compulsory quarantine, persons who have been fully vaccinated and are subject to compulsory quarantine for seven days, and persons who are not yet vaccinated and are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days. As a transitional arrangement, if a relevant person who arrived at Hong Kong between January 18 and January 25 has undergone compulsory testing in a CTC on the 12th or 16th day of arrival at Hong Kong, he or she would be considered to have fulfilled the compulsory testing requirements.

Currently, all persons arriving at Hong Kong under the Return2hk or Come2hk Schemes are required to obtain a negative test result by undergoing a test on the day of arrival at Hong Kong or within three days before that day. Meanwhile, persons who have stayed in places in the Mainland other than Guangdong Province or Macao are required to present at the boarding of a flight for Hong Kong negative result proof of a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 which is conducted on the day of or within three days prior to the scheduled time of departure. All persons arriving at Hong Kong via the airport are also subject to the "test-and-hold" arrangement, and can only leave upon confirmation of a negative test result.

The day of a person's arrival at Hong Kong is counted as the first day. For example, for a person who arrives at Hong Kong on February 5, he or she shall undergo the third-day test on February 7, the fifth-day test on February 9, and the 12th-day test on February 16.

The Government will verify whether the relevant persons had complied with the compulsory testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will 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 order is an offence and the offender will be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

Quarantine arrangements for persons arriving at Hong Kong who have stayed in Taiwan

From February 5, Hong Kong residents who have stayed in Taiwan in the past 14 days will be subject to compulsory quarantine in DQHs for 14 days, with six tests to be conducted during quarantine, followed by self-monitoring for seven days. They are required to undergo compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong, with the 19th-day test to be conducted in a CTC.

For non-Hong Kong residents travelling to Hong Kong from Taiwan, only those who are fully vaccinated (see note) will be allowed to board a flight

to Hong Kong, and they will be subject to the same quarantine and testing arrangements as Hong Kong residents. Those non-Hong Kong residents who are not fully vaccinated will not be allowed to enter Hong Kong.

For persons who arrived at Hong Kong from Taiwan before February 5 and are required to undergo the 15th to 21st days of quarantine in DQHs on or after February 5 as per the original quarantine orders (i.e. inbound travellers from Taiwan who arrive at Hong Kong between January 16 and February 4), the Department of Health will arrange for them to undergo relevant testing in batches in an orderly manner before the completion of quarantine. If they obtain a negative test result and have completed at least 14 days of quarantine, they will be arranged to leave the DQHs in turn. Upon departure from the DQHs, the relevant persons will need to self-monitor from the 15th to 21st days of arrival at Hong Kong, and undergo compulsory testing on the 16th and 19th days of arrival at Hong Kong.

The above adjusted compulsory quarantine and testing arrangement is in line with the arrangement applicable to inbound travellers from overseas, as announced by the Government earlier.

The Government will gazette the relevant updated specifications under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C), the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to effect the above measures from 0.00am on February 5.

Note: Relevant persons who are fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record, as well as children under 12 years old accompanied by them, can board for Hong Kong. In addition, persons who (i) are unfit for vaccination due to health reasons with relevant proof from a medical practitioner or (ii) have received one dose of a recognised COVID-19 vaccine and hold a recognised vaccination record, if they were certified by a medical practitioner that they were unfit to receive the second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine because of health reasons after receiving the first dose of the vaccine, are exceptionally allowed to board for Hong Kong.

[Transcript of remarks by CE at media session \(with photo/video\)](#)

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session this afternoon (January 31) on the investigation in relation to officials attending a banquet in the evening on January 3:

Reporter: Hello, Mrs Lam. Three questions. The first one, did you accept Mr Fung's justification that he forgot whether he was masked on after he drank alcohol? Will the Government follow up on the matter whether he breached the social distancing rules? Second question, to follow up on the case of the Immigration chief, why wasn't him required to step down considering that it is the second time he breached the social distancing rules? And the third question, could you please explain on behalf of certain involved officials on why their attendance was related to work, especially the chief of the Police, the ICAC and the Immigration? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. In your first two questions, you related to social distancing rules. The so-called social distancing rules are prescribed under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance, that is Cap. 599, specifically is Cap. 599F as far as this restaurant's rules are concerned. The investigation that I have ordered the Director of the Chief Executive's Office and the Secretary for the Civil Service to undertake is a disciplinary investigation. It will not override the legal or statutory investigation which is to be undertaken by the regulatory authority; in this case, it is the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. And the department is still doing the investigation, not only for the restaurant, not only for the 15 officials but also for some 200 guests who have attended that party. This is not for me to say whether a particular person has breached social distancing rules. But in my investigation, through the detailed information gathering by the two respective colleagues, that I have now considered all the evidence and come to the view who have violated the disciplinary code and have to be subject to certain actions, there are altogether three officials. I think the one that you have mentioned is subject to a verbal warning. A verbal warning is a form of sanction both under the Civil Service Regulations and the Code for Officials Under the Political Appointment System. In the provision in the code under the heading of "Sanctions", "Warning" is one of the sanctions. Mr Fung is being put under one of the sanctions. In a way, he is being punished because of staying too long – for over four hours up till midnight – and for probably breaching the rule of not putting on a mask and so on.

For the Director of Immigration, as far as this particular incident is concerned, the investigation reveals that he arrived very late at about 9.30pm and stayed outside of the restaurant for 15 minutes and then he left. Generally speaking, everyone was under the impression that if you have not entered the premises – because Cap. 599F applies to scheduled premises – if you have not entered the particular premises then you are not required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe". This is the investigation outcome as far as we are concerned. But, of course, the regulatory authority, that is the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, is continuing their own investigation

I have taken the view, and I think it is a reasonable view, that there is no strong justification to impose a sanction on the Director of Immigration, let alone a sanction to step down; and he is a Principal Official appointed by the Central People's Government, so I have reported the situations of the Principal Officials to the Central People's Government, and

my conclusion has the endorsement of the Central People's Government.

The third is about relation to work. We have looked at the reasons and justifications provided by each of the 15 officials and I am satisfied that each of them has a linkage to Mr Hung. In my statement just now, I have described the various areas of work that colleagues will find themselves having a relationship with Mr Hung. One is about information technology. For those who know Mr Hung, he is a, sort of, community person or leader in the IT sector. And the second area is about Hong Kong and Mainland relationship because Mr Hung represents Qianhai, Shenzhen in terms of liaison with Hong Kong. As a result of that we have so many things working with Qianhai, Shenzhen on the tax side, the corruption prevention side, the legal front and so on. And I believe the Commissioner of ICAC was right now in some discussions with Qianhai about how to help on corruption prevention.

Mr Hung also has a long period of experience and work in youth development, so colleagues involved in youth development will have a close connection and knowledge about his work. Finally, about the Commissioner of Police, actually I didn't realise that, but I now realise that, Mr Hung is a long-term non-official member of the Road Safety Council, and the Road Safety Council is an institution under the Hong Kong Police Force. In that context, they are also working partners, so it is also understandable that they receive an invitation and out of a matter of courtesy they have attended the meeting. These are common sense. I am not trying to defend them, but I would say that this is understandable for officials who have some official dealings with a private individual and when they receive an invitation from this private individual, as a matter of courtesy or as an indication of recognition of the work that this individual has done for Government departments, so they accepted the invitation and attended the event. Thank you.

Reporter: Good afternoon. You said it's acceptable for officials to attend the party because they have a work relationship with the party organiser. So does this mean that in the future, officials can attend high-risk events if it's for work? And also, some senior DAB (The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong) members, including ExCo (Executive Council) member Ip Kwok-him, have said they felt Tsui could have kept his job, so what do you think about such views? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I hope we would not react in a too far-fetched manner. When I said that in this particular incident, it is acceptable for most of the officials to accept the invitation to attend this birthday party reception, one has to take into account the relationship that that particular official has with the host. If they have a working relationship, they know each other and they receive an invitation to celebrate something with this person, then as a matter of courtesy, or even to use that occasion to meet up with other people belonging to the same sector, it is understandable. This is how public officials sometimes could do their job. You try – to reach out, to network, to understand, to receive feedback. I hope you were not suggesting that public officials should not have any private event or function, that was going too far to the extreme. That is my intention of what I have said.

But of course, if that event is a high-risk event, then nobody should go, not only my public officials. Nobody should go to any high-risk event, especially in an epidemic situation. But again, as I have explained, January 3 was before the Government announced another major wave and package of tightening up the social distancing measures. So one could excuse them for not knowing the situation and still attending a function on the full understanding that the rules would be fully complied with. I have received and looked at the invitation sent through the WhatsApp message. It did tell the guests that this event followed exactly the rules that the restaurant had to comply with, and so on and so on. With that sort of situation, I said it is understandable and acceptable for the officials to accept the invitation and to attend the event, as long as they fulfilled all the requirements, and better still, they did not stay too long, and they did not mingle too much with the guests, and left at the early stage of the party before it became very crowded.

I cannot comment on what other people said about how we deal with this case and the resignation of Casper Tsui. I can only end by saying that the political accountability system was introduced with an intent in mind, and that is, senior officials should be held responsible and accountable for their decisions, and this is also intended to meet the public expectations that senior officials should uphold high standards in their conduct, in their integrity, in their daily dealings with people. The fact that Caspar has decided to resign in order to shoulder this personal responsibility or this political responsibility – I think that's something that we should affirm, that this is the right act to do. And by the way, I'm sure you are aware that Caspar has joined the Government for over 10 years. He joined in 2008 as a very young official, and climbed through the ranks from political assistant to deputy secretary, and was chosen by me and nominated by me, and appointed by the Central People's Government, as a Principal Official in his early 40s. And I worked with him in the last two years or so. I think he was, by and large, a very responsible and diligent colleague, but it was a very unfortunate event that he had made the wrong judgement, lack of political sensitivity, especially in holding his position of the Secretary for Home Affairs. But I do wish him luck and I hope that he will continue to serve the community. He is still young. I'm sure that he has learned, although learning a very hard way over this incident, but I'm sure that he will try his best to continue to serve the people of Hong Kong in various capacities.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

