

Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 26) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at the beach.

Government gazettes compulsory testing notice

The Government exercises the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publishes in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at 15 specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

In view of a preliminary positive imported case who had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period, 15 specified premises visited by the case are included in the compulsory testing notice. The Government strongly reminds members of the public to strictly follow the compulsory testing requirements and undergo the multiple tests on time as required. The above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well. They are advised to closely monitor their health conditions. They should seek medical attention and undergo testing even if they have only mild symptoms.

Persons subject to compulsory testing in accordance with a compulsory testing notice must go to any of the mobile specimen collection stations, community testing centres (CTCs) or recognised local medical testing institutions to undergo professional swab sampling in fulfilling the requirements for compulsory testing. Young children may continue to undergo the test using a stool specimen.

If Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above, the Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or the post-super typhoon "extreme conditions"

announcement by the Government is in force at any time during the period for undergoing the compulsory testing, the period for undergoing the compulsory testing will be further extended for one day.

The Comirnaty and CoronaVac vaccines are highly effective in preventing severe cases and deaths from COVID-19. They can provide protection to those vaccinated to prevent serious complications and even death after infection. The Government appeals to persons who are not yet vaccinated, especially senior citizens, chronic patients and other immunocompromised persons who face a higher chance of death after COVID-19 infection, to get vaccinated as soon as possible for better self-protection before the fifth wave strikes in Hong Kong.

Details of the compulsory testing notice are in Annex 1.

Subsequent to the announcement by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) on the updated quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with a mutant strain, 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 Department of Health (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). For prudence's sake, the above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

In accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, has to undergo testing within two days of him or her becoming aware that the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (6275 6901), fax (2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test. For prudence's sake, the above compulsory testing requirement applies to those who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course as well.

CTCs provide testing services for the public, including free service for persons subject to compulsory testing. Booking and walk-in services are available. Members of the public only need to provide simple personal information on the 24-hour booking system (www.communitytest.gov.hk/en). The system shows the booking status of the centres for the coming two weeks to facilitate the public's planning and selection of a suitable testing centre and a time slot for testing. The testing centres will accord priority to serve individuals with advance bookings. As of 6pm on December 25, there were around 31 000 booking places available for today (December 26) at the CTCs, and around 92 per cent availability for booking places for the coming seven days. Members of the public may call the testing centres for enquiries on the

availability of bookings or walk-in quotas before visiting the centres.

As persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of local COVID-19 cases with a mutant strain will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH, the mobile specimen collection station at loading bay at Level 1 Carpark, Rambler Crest, Tsing Yi, will be re-opened today and the mobile station at the open area outside On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, Tuen Mun, will continue to operate to provide free testing service for residents and workers subject to compulsory testing. The Government will also set up a mobile specimen collection station at the open area next to Discovery Bay Fire Station today to provide free testing service for residents and workers of Discovery Bay subject to compulsory testing. Outdoor mobile specimen collection stations will be closed if Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or the Red Rainstorm Warning Signal is in force while all mobile specimen collection stations together with all CTCs will be closed when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or higher or the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is in force.

Free testing service will be provided to persons subject to compulsory testing at CTCs and mobile specimen collection stations located at 31 places in various districts today. The testing capacity should be sufficient to meet the demand. Persons subject to compulsory testing and those with the "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the CHP reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at CTCs or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable). The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations are stated in Annex 2.

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the CTCs (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en);
3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf), and the relevant sample must be taken through combined nasal and throat swabs; or
4. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the CHP (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the stool sample collected as per relevant guidelines.

If a person subject to compulsory testing obtains a medical certificate issued by a registered medical practitioner, proving that he or she is unfit to undergo testing using a sample taken through combined nasal and throat swabs because of health reasons, then he or she may choose to undergo testing via the following routes by providing a deep throat saliva sample:

1. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the

120 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general out-patient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);

2. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority; or

3. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the DH and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau cautioned that testing received at the Accident and Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notice.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the CTCs."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notifications containing the result of the test and the relevant medical certificate (if applicable) for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the CTCs, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the CTCs are available at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and 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). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to the DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons."

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (December 25), no COVID-19 confirmed patient was discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 12 189 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

A total of 118 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre and the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre. Among those patients, one is in serious condition (case number: 12431) while the remainder 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 25 additional

confirmed cases of COVID-19 and provides investigation update on case 12557

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 25, the CHP was investigating 25 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 581 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 580 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Fourteen of the cases involved mutant strains; mutation test results of nine cases are pending; while the viral load of the remaining two cases is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 14 males and 11 females, aged 21 to 80. Eleven of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and 14 from Group A specified places (high-risk). Twenty patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and five tested positive during quarantine.

Among the above-mentioned cases, four cases had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period. Case 12568 involves a 28-year-old male patient who is a Hong Kong karate athlete. He lives at a village house in Ho Pui Tsuen, Pat Heung, Yuen Long. He departed Hong Kong on December 9 for Kazakhstan via Qatar, after he tested negative on the same day. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 23 from Korea by flight KE607 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. He developed symptoms on December 23. His Ct value is less than 30 and his specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

Case 12569 involves a 33-year-old male patient who is also a Hong Kong karate athlete. He is reported to have stayed in Hong Kong Sports Institute, 25 Yuen Wo Road, Sha Tin, during the incubation period. He departed Hong Kong on December 12 for Kazakhstan via Qatar, after he tested negative on the same day. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 23 from Korea by flight KE607 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. He developed symptoms on December 23. His Ct value is less than 30 and his specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

Case 12579 involves a 79-year-old female patient living at Tower 2, Wing Fai Centre, Fanling. She departed Hong Kong on December 9 for the United Kingdom (UK), after she tested negative on December 7. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 24 from the UK by flight CX252 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. She was asymptomatic and with a Ct value over 30 and her mutation test result is pending.

Case 12586 involves a 28-year-old female patient who is a local air crew

member living at a village house in Tai Mei Tuk Village, Tai Po. She departed Hong Kong on December 22 for Australia, after she tested negative for COVID-19 on December 20. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 24 from Australia by flight CX138 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive. She was asymptomatic and with a Ct value over 30 and her specimen carried the N501Y and T478K mutant strain.

As a prudent measure, the places where the above four cases resided or visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods have been included in a compulsory testing notice (CTN). Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

A total of 73 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 11 to 24). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) confirmed that cases 12555, 12556 and 12557 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Case 12555 involves a 27-year-old female who tested positive during quarantine and case 12556 involves a 36-year-old male who tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC.

For case 12557, it involves a 64-year-old male who is a cleaner at a designated toilet solely for use by preliminary positive imported cases confined at a designated area at the Midfield Concourse of HKIA while waiting for transfer to hospital. After comparing his genetic sequencing, it was confirmed by the PHLSB that the genomes of the case were identical to the genomes of an imported case earlier (case 12542) and were highly similar to the genomes of recent imported cases involving Omicron. Case 12542 arrived at Hong Kong on December 19 from Ghana and Qatar and tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement at HKIA. The CHP considered that case 12557 acquired infection from coming into contact with imported case involving Omicron during his work inside the toilet. As such, the CHP has classified case 12557 as an import-related case.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 44 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Separately, the CHP is investigating a case of COVID-19 confirmed in Shanghai involving a 23-year-old female patient who lives at East Wing, 5/F, Jockey Club Global Graduate Tower, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. She travelled to Shanghai on December 5 by flight MU508 and she tested positive there on December 23. According to information provided by the patient, she developed symptoms on December 22. She received one dose of COVID-19 vaccination (Sinopharm) in the Mainland on April 28 and another dose of COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) in the Mainland on June 10. The places where the patient resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a CTN.

Also, the DH invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights in Hong Kong from the relevant original port of the following airlines for 14 days:

– Passenger flight (EK384) operated by Emirates arriving from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangkok, Thailand, to Hong Kong on December 23 had two passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing, and one passenger failed to comply with the requirements specified under the Cap. 599H (landing of passenger flights from Dubai and Bangkok in Hong Kong from December 25 to January 7, 2022 prohibited);

– Passenger flight (KE607) operated by Korean Air arriving in Hong Kong from Seoul, Korea, on December 23 had five passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing (landing of passenger flights from Seoul in Hong Kong from December 26 to January 8, 2022 prohibited); and

– Passenger flight (CX252) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from London, the UK, on December 24, had seven passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing (landing of passenger flights from London in Hong Kong from December 26 to January 8, 2022 prohibited).

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that 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).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (December 26):

- Block 1, Rambler Crest, 1 Tsing Yi Road, Tsing Yi
- On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, 201 Wu Chui Road, Tuen Mun

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

â€‹â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "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, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."

Persons in custody participate in Christmas activities (with photos)

The Correctional Services Department has arranged for persons in custody (PICs) to attend activities during the Christmas festive period.

The Catholic Bishop of Hong Kong, the Most Reverend Stephen Chow, accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Wong Kwok-hing; the Correctional Services Chaplain, Deacon Edwin Ng; and Chief Superintendent, Mr Leung Tsan-ming, visited Stanley Prison and presided at a Christmas liturgy of the Word today (December 25) to share his faith and Christmas blessings with participating PICs. He also went to the prison hospital to convey his sympathy and support to the patients.

Furthermore, the Archbishop of Hong Kong, the Most Reverend Andrew Chan, presided at a Christmas service in Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution on December 23 to preach and share religious messages with PICs. He also visited the institution hospital to show his love and care to the patients.

Through the Correctional Services Chaplain, voluntary chaplains and visitors from religious organisations, a wide range of spiritual and social services are offered to those PICs who wish to participate regardless of their religious affiliation. The services include visits, teaching, counselling, religious worship and recreational activities.



