

CHP follows up on SARS-CoV-2 virus case 12754 and two related cases tested preliminarily positive

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 5) said that it is following up on the epidemiological investigation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus case 12754 and is investigating two related cases tested preliminarily positive.

The first case involves 48-year-old female patient living at Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay, who is a close contact of an earlier case epidemiologically linked with imported case 12754 (family member of imported case 12676 living together). She has no travel history during incubation period. She developed headache, cough and sore throat on January 2 and was sent to hospital on January 4. Her test conducted on the same day tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value of about 20. She danced with case 12754 together with some 20 friends on December 31, 2021 at Victoria Park and Causeway Bay Community Centre. She is a housewife and received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Sinopharm) on August 20 and September 10 in the Mainland.

The second case involves a 43-year-old female patient living at Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay, who is a foreign domestic helper (FDH). Her employer is another close contact of case 12754. She has no recent travel history. The patient developed symptoms including fever, cough, runny nose and sore throat on January 2 and was arranged by her employer to a boarding house for FDH at Rialto Mansion, 177-191A King's Road, North Point on January 4. She was sent to hospital on the same day and tested preliminarily positive, with a Ct value of less than 20. She received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty). According to the information so far, case 12754 visited the residence of the 43-year-old female patient and her employer at Chesterfield Mansion on December 30, 2021. The employer also danced with case 12754 and some 20 persons aforementioned on December 31 at Victoria Park and Causeway Bay Community Centre.

As the aforementioned cases may carry the Omicron mutant strain with higher transmissibility and risk of infection, the Government has made "restriction-testing declaration" last night for the buildings where the two patients resided (Causeway Tower, 16-22 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay and Chesterfield Mansion, 11 Kingston Street, Causeway Bay) and persons who resided or worked at the buildings will be subject to increased compulsory testing frequency. The places where they had visited during the incubation periods will also be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified date.

Further investigation of the CHP revealed that employer of the 43-year-old female patient and another eight close contacts of case 12754 boarded the

cruise ship "Spectrum of the Seas" on January 2, which embarked on a "cruise-to-nowhere" on January 2 and scheduled to return on January 6. According to information provided by the cruise company, there are about 2 500 passengers and some 1 200 staff members. Once obtained the information that some close contacts boarded the cruise ship, the CHP immediately requested the cruise company to isolate the nine close contacts on the cruise ship first and arrange testing for them onboard. The nine persons tested preliminarily negative. The CHP has also requested the cruise ship to return earlier, i.e. morning on January 5. For prudence's sake, the cruise ship will be included in a compulsory testing notice. Specified persons who had been on board the cruise ship at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified dates. The Government will arrange testing for all passengers and staff members when the cruise ship arrived Kai Tak Cruise Terminal. The nine close contacts will be sent to Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre for quarantine. Officers of the CHP will board the cruise ship to inspect the sanitary condition.

The spokesman for the CHP said, "The Government has remained vigilant and has been closely monitoring the latest scientific data on mutant strains as well as the epidemic situation of various places. The most stringent anti-epidemic measures will be implemented to prevent the mutant strains from spreading in the local community."

At the moment, the adverse impact on the epidemic situation caused by the newly emerged mutant strains is not fully known yet, but vaccination is still essential to prevent severe cases and deaths from COVID-19 infection. The Government has launched the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. Members of the public are encouraged to get vaccinated. Details of the programme can be found at the designated website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). The CHP also urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health condition, or individuals with exposure to infection risk, to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons.