

CHP investigates 1 840 confirmed and 1 561 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 4 565 cases pending status by nucleic acid tests as well as 12 116 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (March 18) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, March 18, the CHP was investigating 7 966 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (1 840 confirmed cases, 1 561 asymptomatic cases and 4 565 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 12 116 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RAT) (8 131 symptomatic cases and 3 985 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 678 679 and 338 265 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RAT respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of three imported cases and 7 963 locally acquired cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests, as well as 12 116 locally acquired cases tested positive by RAT. The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. A list of buildings related to the cases is available at the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

In addition, as of 0.00am, March 18, a total of 5 188 deaths that have been tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) was recorded, with 5 167 and 21 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 5 401 deaths that have been 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 (March 17), the total number of confirmed cases was 272 255, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases, pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 135 275, 10 and 263 173 respectively.

Also, as a passenger flight (MH072) operated by Malaysia Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on March 17 had one passenger who tested positive upon arrival, and one passenger who failed to comply with the requirements specified under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), the DH thus invoked Cap. 599H to prohibit the landing of

passenger flights from Kuala Lumpur operated by Malaysia Airlines in Hong Kong from March 19 to April 1.

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that the local situation of COVID-19 infection became severe recently 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 social distancing measures, avoid going out and 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.

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 are 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. Meanwhile, a person who gets COVID-19 and influenza at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. Influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. In addition, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the CHP's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/17980.html).