

CHP investigates 101 confirmed and 41 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 60 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 3) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, February 3, the CHP was investigating 101 additional confirmed cases and 41 additional asymptomatic cases (i.e. there were 142 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours). This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 14 013 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 560 and nine respectively. Together with the previous two cases with pending case category, Hong Kong has recorded a total of 14 584 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 21 imported cases and 121 locally acquired cases (including 88 cases epidemiologically linked with previous cases). One-hundred-and-sixteen of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of 22 cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining four cases is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 59 males and 83 females, aged 6 to 85. 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 1 360 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 20 to February 2). Six-hundred-and-seventy-nine of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related, 129 are local cases, 334 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, adjacent yard area and shared pipes) were detected, to undergo quarantine at quarantine centre:

- Bik Shui House, Shui Pin Wai Estate, Yuen Long (involving three cases at two units of room 18 on different floors): residents of room 18 on 6th and 7th floor;

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHL SB confirmed that cases 13362, 13401, 13422, 13426, 13445, 13448, 13462, 13466, 13483, 13489, 13503, 13505, 13518, 13524, 13612, 13619, 13668, 13673, 13678, 13711, 13761, 13799, 13800, 13806 to 13809, 13832, 13835, 13846, 13849, 13857, 13865 to 13867, 13870, 13875, 13883, 13896, 13899, 13905, 13907, 13909, 13915, 13916, 13919, 13944, 13945, 13971, 13973, 13999, 14001, 14013, 14034, 14035, 14045, 14098, 14099, 14102 and 14107 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 834 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flight (TK083) operated by Turkish Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Istanbul, Turkey, on February 1 had six passengers who tested positive upon arrival, and the passenger flight (AY101) operated by Finnair arriving in Hong Kong from Helsinki, Finland, on February 2 had five passengers who tested positive upon arrival, the DH thus 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 Istanbul operated by Turkish Airlines and from Helsinki operated by Finnair from February 3 to 16.

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.