

CHP investigates 111 confirmed and 53 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 35 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 27) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 27, the CHP was investigating 111 additional confirmed cases and 53 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 164 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours). In addition, among the earlier cases reported since January 1, there are 77 asymptomatic cases at the time of reporting changed to confirmed cases after hospital admission, while one case tested positive earlier (case 13380) turned out to be a re-positive case after investigation. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 450 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 333 and seven respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 13 790 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 48 imported cases, 71 cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases, 12 local cases, and 33 cases epidemiologically linked with local cases. 153 of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of nine cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining two cases is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 72 males and 92 females, aged 1 to 83. 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 624 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 13 to 26). 426 of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases, 26 are local cases, 53 are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13116, 13121, 13158, 13187, 13188, 13190, 13193, 13196, 13199, 13200, 13201, 13204, 13212, 13215, 13222, 13226, 13227, 13229, 13230, 13242, 13249, 13250, 13258, 13261, 13264 to 13266, 13270, 13272 to 13274, 13278, 13280, 13293 and 13335 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there

are so far 676 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flight (RA409) operated by Nepal Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Kathmandu, Nepal, on January 25 had 34 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 Kathmandu operated by Nepal Airlines from January 27 to February 9.

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.

â€‹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.