

CHP investigates 13 confirmed and 16 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and seven additional Omicron cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 3) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 3, the CHP was investigating 13 additional confirmed cases and 16 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 29 additional cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in that 24 hours), taking the number of confirmed cases to 12 677 so far and starting from January 1 recorded 45 asymptomatic cases. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 12 722 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 28 imported cases and one case epidemiologically linked with imported case. Twenty-seven of the cases involved mutant strains while mutation test results of the remaining two cases are pending. The patients comprise six males and 23 females, aged 24 to 66. Among the imported cases, one of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and 27 from Group A specified places (high-risk); eight patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and 17 tested positive during quarantine. Case 12709 is a close contact of a previously confirmed imported cases 12693 and tested positive at a hospital. Case 12726 and 12727 are close contacts of two previously confirmed imported cases 12593 and 12655 respectively. They tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (PBQC). Case 12708 is the case epidemiologically linked with imported case, who is the wife of case 12654 related to Moon Palace. She was arranged to quarantine at the PBQC on December 30 and tested positive subsequently. The case details have been announced yesterday (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202201/02/P2022010200536.htm).

For imported cases 12699 and 12700, the patients had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period. Case 12699 involves a 45-year-old male patient who is a local aircrew member living at Tower 6B, Century Link in Tung Chung. He departed Hong Kong for Australia on December 27, 2021 and returned to Hong Kong on December 30 by flight CX178 from Australia. His specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. After his arrival, the patient then stayed at Headland Hotel (airport hotel) under relevant quarantine arrangement. He developed sore throat on January 1 and tested positive on the same day with Ct value of about 30. According to the patient, he departed for the United Kingdom on December 19. His test conducted at the TSCC after his arrival on December 20 and the test conducted at a community testing centre on December 22 both tested negative. He then departed for Malaysia on

December 26 and returned Hong Kong on the same day. His test conducted at the TSCC tested negative. Case 12700 involves a 28-year-old female patient living at Tower 1, Yuk Ming Towers, 208 Third Street, Sai Ying Pun. She departed Hong Kong on December 23 for Canada after she tested negative on December 21. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 30 from Canada by flight AC007 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. She underwent compulsory quarantine at a designated quarantine hotel (Best Western Plus Hotel Hong Kong, Sai Ying Pun) and her sample on January 1, 2022 tested positive, with a CT value less than 30.

The CHP is also investigating a case epidemiologically linked with imported case which is tested preliminarily positive involving a 35-year-old male. He is a family member of an earlier imported case 12676 living together. He has no recent travel history. He is asymptomatic and as a close contact, he was arranged to conduct quarantine at PBQC on January 1. His specimen collected on January 3 tested preliminarily positive with a Ct value of 30/32. The test results on mutant strains are pending. He works at Unit 2002, Floor 20, The Metropolis Tower, 10 Metroplis Drive, Hung Hom where he last went to work on December 31. The patient has not received COVID-19 vaccination.

Also, the CHP is investigating an overseas case involving a 31-year-old male patient who is a local aircrew member living at Yiu Chung Building, 370A Portland Street, Mong Kok. He tested negative in Hong Kong on December 24 and travelled to the United States (US) on December 25. He arrived in Hong Kong on December 26 from the US by flight CX882 and his specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative. Subsequently, he travelled to the US on December 30 by flight CX846 after he tested negative on December 28 in Hong Kong. His specimen collected in the US on December 31 tested positive. He developed cough and fever from December 30. He received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty) on July 1 and July 22 in Hong Kong.

With regard to the four above-mentioned cases, as a prudent measure, specified persons who were present at the relevant venues (including the places where the cases resided, visited or worked in Hong Kong during the incubation periods) at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified dates.

A total of 166 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (December 20 to January 2, 2022). Five of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related cases, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 12573, 12580, 12590, 12607, 12617, 12619 and 12656 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. These cases involve four males and three females aged 15 to 61 years old. Two of them tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the TSCC and four tested positive during quarantine; and one tested positive during compulsory testing for persons working in airport.

Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 102 cases

involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flight (CX906) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from Manila, the Philippines, on January 1, 2022 had seven 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 Manila operated by Cathay Pacific from January 3 to 16, 2022.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local 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 (January 4):

- Cheung Hing Building, 44-48 Pitt Street, Yau Ma Tei
- Block 18A, Serenity Villa, 230A Tai Po Tau, Tai Po
- On Hei House, Siu Hei Court, 201 Wu Chui Road, Tuen Mun
- Tower 17, Hong Kong Parkview, 88 Tai Tam Reservoir Road, Tai Tam
- Grandeur Terrace Block 2, 88 Tin Shui Road, Tin Shui Wai
- Tower 6, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast Phase II, 1 Kin Tung Road, Tung Chung (excluding the Greenfield English (International) Kindergarten (Tung Chung) located on the ground floor of Tower 6, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast Phase II and Tower 7, Albany Cove, Caribbean Coast)
- Block 6, Villa Athena, 600 Sai Sha Road, Ma On Shan
- Tower 1, Yuk Ming Towers, 208 Third Street, Sai Ying Pun

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

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)."