

CHP investigates 16 confirmed and 17 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 25 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 9) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 9, the CHP was investigating 16 additional confirmed cases and 17 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 33 additional cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours). This brings a total number of confirmed cases to 12 786 so far and starting from January 1 recorded 149 asymptomatic cases. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 12 935 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 27 imported cases, five cases epidemiologically linked with imported case and one possibly import-related case. Thirty of the cases involved mutant strains, mutation test results of two cases are pending, while the viral load of the remaining case is insufficient for mutation test. The patients comprise 17 males and 16 females, aged 11-month-old to 71. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The five cases epidemiologically linked with imported case are 12909 (13-year-old girl who is a household contact of case 12854), 12910 (42-year-old female who is a household contact of case 12854), 12911 (3-year-old boy who is a family member of case 12821 and had breakfast at Six Garden Restaurant with case 12821 on December 31, 2021), 12913 (71-year-old female who visited the workplace of cases 12825 and 12880 on January 3) and 12916 (3-year-old boy who is a household contact of case 12903). The possibly import-related case is 12908 (39-year-old female who is a part-time cabin cleaning worker at the Hong Kong International Airport). Details of cases 12908, 12911 and 12913 have been announced yesterday (January 8) (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202201/08/P2022010800739.htm).

A total of 321 cases tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (December 26, 2021, to January 8, 2022). Thirty of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related cases, one is a local case, while the rest are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 12751, 12752, 12771 to 12774, 12777 to 12780, 12786, 12787, 12791 to 12794, 12797, 12838 to 12840, 12854, 12860, 12872, 12873 and 12875 all carried the Variant of Concern

Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 265 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as the passenger flight (SQ007) operated by Singapore Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from San Francisco, the United States of America, on January 7, 2022 had eight passengers who tested positive upon arrival, and the passenger flight (NH811) operated by All Nippon Airways arriving in Hong Kong from Tokyo, Japan, on January 7, 2022 had six 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 San Francisco operated by Singapore Airlines and from Tokyo operated by All Nippon Airways from January 9 to 22, 2022.

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 that 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.

With higher transmissibility and risk of infection of the Omicron mutant strain, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to comply with the recently tightened social distancing measures in the next two weeks, and to refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or gathering (particularly religious or cross-family activities and gatherings). This would lower the risk of infection and prevent the virus from spreading in the community.

â€‹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)."