

CHP investigates 3 231 confirmed and 2 717 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 8 506 cases pending status by nucleic acid tests as well as 14 818 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (March 16) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, March 16, the CHP was investigating 14 454 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (3 231 confirmed cases, 2 717 asymptomatic cases and 8 506 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 14 818 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RAT) (10 189 symptomatic cases and 4 629 asymptomatic cases) were reported.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 11 imported cases and 14 443 locally acquired cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests, as well as 14 818 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, the CHP has finished processing the reports of cases tested positive by RAT during the period between February 26 and March 5 via the "Declaration System for Individuals Tested Positive for COVID-19 Using Rapid Antigen Test" and the number of cases confirmed is 184 390. The daily figures of cases tested positive by RAT are listed in Annex. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 662 085 and 313 127 cases that tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RAT respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

In addition, as of 0.00am, March 16, a total of 4 634 deaths related to COVID-19 during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) was recorded, with 4 619 and 15 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 4 847 deaths related to COVID-19.

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 15), the total number of confirmed cases was 266 902, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases, pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 131 029, 10 and 249 690 respectively.

Also, as the passenger flights (SQ894) operated by Singapore Airlines

arriving in Hong Kong from Singapore, within a seven-day period (March 9 to 15) had four passengers who tested positive upon arrival, and the passenger flight (EK384) operated by Emirates from Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangkok, Thailand, arriving in Hong Kong on March 15 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 Singapore operated by Singapore Airlines and from Dubai and Bangkok operated by Emirates from March 17 to 30.

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.

â€‹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).