

CHP investigates 5 500 confirmed and 2 268 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 9 295 cases pending status

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 26) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, February 26, the CHP was investigating 5 500 additional confirmed cases, 2 268 additional asymptomatic cases and 9 295 cases with pending case status in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 17 063 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus in those 24 hours).

The newly reported cases consist of six imported cases and 17 057 locally acquired cases. The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases.

In addition, the Government announced yesterday that the review procedure by DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) on the samples that tested preliminarily positive by testing contractors will be dispensed. Positive cases detected in nucleic acid tests by testing contractors are now directly deemed as confirmed cases. Under this arrangement, cases that are originally pending PHLSB's review are treated as cases that tested positive. Hence, Hong Kong has recorded a total of 138 955 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

As at 4pm today, a total of 73 937 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus had been reported in the past 14 days (February 12 to 25), including 73 847 locally acquired cases and 90 imported cases. A list of buildings related to the cases is available at the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Furthermore, among the earlier cases reported, there were cases (including pending cases) changed to confirmed, asymptomatic or re-positive cases. As at yesterday (February 25), the total number of confirmed cases was 38 886, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases, pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 5 715, 10 and 77 281 respectively.

People with positive or preliminary positive COVID-19 nucleic acid test results will receive an SMS notification about the result, together with a request to fill in an electronic form (www.chp.gov.hk/cdpi) to submit information, including those on family members living in the same household. This is to facilitate the work of the CHP such as epidemiological investigation and arrangement of hospital admission, isolation and quarantine. People who receive the relevant SMS should check the personal information and information on testing in the SMS carefully and fill in the electronic form as soon as possible to provide accurate and complete

information.

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.

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).