

CHP investigates 55 confirmed and 117 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 18 cases pending status by nucleic acid tests as well as 173 cases tested positive by rapid antigen tests (with photo)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (April 30) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, April 30, the CHP was investigating 190 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus by nucleic acid tests (55 confirmed cases, 117 asymptomatic cases and 18 cases with pending case status) in the past 24 hours. Separately, 173 additional positive cases through rapid antigen tests (RATs) (91 symptomatic cases and 82 asymptomatic cases) were reported. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 758 541 and 445 669 cases that have tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The aforementioned newly reported cases consist of 25 imported cases (23 cases and two cases tested positive by nucleic acid tests and RATs respectively). The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases. Please refer to the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for more information.

The CHP has all along been closely monitoring the development of the fifth wave epidemic situation and carrying out epidemiological investigations for cases tested positive, as well as adjusting the strategy and focus of contact tracing work. The CHP stresses that its contact tracing at this stage places focus on cases involving people and places with higher risks, including the residential care homes for the elderly and persons with disabilities, schools, and places having positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads. Large-scale and effective contact tracing work for all cases would be conducted whenever necessary and feasible.

Meanwhile, whole genome sequencing analysis by the DH's Public Health Laboratory Services Branch confirmed that among 10 imported cases recorded earlier, there are five cases each found to carry the sub-lineage BA.2.12 and BA.2.12.1 under the Omicron mutant strain. These imported cases, involving three males and seven females aged 5 to 66, arrived in Hong Kong from Australia, the United States, Germany, India and Singapore during the period from April 6 to 26. Seven cases tested positive on arrival while the remaining three tested positive during compulsory quarantine at designated quarantine hotels. Scientific information on the public health significance about the sub-lineages is lacking at the moment. The World Health

Organization is working on to further assess their characteristics, including whether they possess increased transmissibility, reduce vaccine effectiveness and increased risk for reinfections. No cases of the sub-lineages was found in the local community so far and the CHP will continue to closely monitor the latest developments.

In addition, as of 0.00am, April 30, a total of 9 095 death cases that had tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus during the fifth wave (since December 31, 2021) were recorded, with 9 021 and 71 deaths reported from the Hospital Authority and public mortuaries respectively as well as three deaths reported from the Chinese University of Hong Kong Medical Centre. Hong Kong has so far recorded a total of 9 308 death cases that have tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

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 (April 29), the total number of confirmed cases was 330 615, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases and pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 196 711, 10 and 231 015 respectively.

The DH 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 the relevant original port of the following airlines for seven days:

- Passenger flight (CX162) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from Sydney, Australia, on April 29, had three passengers who tested positive upon arrival (landing of passenger flights from Sydney in Hong Kong from May 1 to 7 prohibited);
- Passenger flight (TG600) operated by Thai Airways arriving in Hong Kong from Bangkok, Thailand, on April 29, had three passengers who tested positive upon arrival (landing of passenger flights from Bangkok in Hong Kong from May 1 to 7 prohibited); and
- Passenger flight (CX865) operated by Cathay Pacific arriving in Hong Kong from Vancouver, Canada, on April 30, had three passengers who tested positive upon arrival (landing of passenger flights from Vancouver in Hong Kong from May 1 to 7 prohibited).

The spokesman for the CHP stressed that as the local situation of COVID-19 infection is still severe, the CHP strongly appeals to the community to continue to comply with social distancing measures, avoid going out and refrain from participating in unnecessary or crowded activities or 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 have 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).

