

CHP investigates 66 confirmed and 26 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and identifies 38 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 31) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 31, the CHP was investigating 66 additional confirmed cases and 26 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 92 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours), while an earlier tested positive case (case 13845) turned out to be a re-positive case after investigation. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 745 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 443 and nine respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 14 197 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 12 imported cases, 13 local cases and 67 cases epidemiologically linked with previous cases. Eighty-two of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of nine cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining case is insufficient for mutation tests. The patients comprise 44 males and 48 females, aged 11-month-old to 87. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk). Case status and classification may be subject to changes when there is new information available during epidemiological investigation and latest information is shown on "COVID-19 Thematic Website".

As at 4pm today, a total of 1 064 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 17 to 30). Six-hundred-and-twenty-nine of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related, 67 are local cases, 183 are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest are imported cases.

Separately, to stop the potential risk of further spread of the virus, the CHP has arranged/will arrange the residents concerned of the following buildings, where cases suspectedly related to environmental factors (including vertical/horizontal transmission and adjacent yard area) were detected, to undergo quarantine at quarantine centre:

- Ming Lai House, Choi Wan (II) Estate, Wong Tai Sin (involving three cases at three units on 10th floor and five cases at four units of room 15 on different floors (including one of the aforementioned case at a

unit on 10th floor)): residents of rooms 14 and 15 on all floors, and rooms 13 and 17 on 10th floor;

- On Kwai House, Kwai Fuk Court, Kwai Chung (involving ten cases at three units of room 08 on different floors): residents of room 08 on all floors;
- Kwai Yan House, Kwai Fong Estate, Kwai Chung (involving six cases at three units on 14th floor and four cases at two units of room 06 on different floors (including three of the aforementioned cases at a unit on 14th floor)): residents of rooms 01 to 12 on 14th floor, and rooms 06 on 15th to 20th floors;
- Tsui Wo House, Tai Wo Estate, Tai Po (involving two cases at two units of room 25 on different floors and four cases at two units of room 26 on different floors): residents of room 25 on 24th to 35th floors and room 26 on 23rd to 35th floors;
- Hong Tim House, Tsz Hong Estate, Tsz Wan Shan (involving five cases at two units of room 06 on different floors): residents of room 06 on 1st to 6th floors.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13336 to 13338, 13344, 13347, 13349, 13351, 13352, 13356, 13357, 13364 to 13366, 13369, 13377, 13384, 13386, 13387, 13389, 13395, 13396, 13398, 13438, 13451, 13525, 13566, 13592, 13613, 13620, 13623, 13680, 13689, 13690, 13698, 13717, 13755, 13759 and 13788 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 774 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

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 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.

â€‹â€‹The spokesman for the CHP stressed that 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. 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 recently tightened social distancing measures, and to 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.