

CHP investigates 77 confirmed and 47 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases and updates classification of two cases and identifies 23 additional Omicron cases from previously announced cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (January 25) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, January 25, the CHP was investigating 77 additional confirmed cases and 47 additional asymptomatic cases in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 124 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 two earlier tested positive cases (cases 13105 and 13175) turned out to be a re-positive case after investigation. This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 181 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 332 and six respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 13 519 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 30 imported cases, 78 cases epidemiologically linked with imported cases, six local cases, and 10 cases epidemiologically linked with local cases. One-hundred-and-twelve of the cases involve mutant strains, and the mutation test results of 12 cases are pending. The patients comprise 76 males and 48 females, aged 1 to 83. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

As at 3pm on January 25, the CHP has recorded a total of 276 Kwai Chung Estate-related cases tested positive and tested preliminarily positive (Yat Kwai House: 184 cases; Ying Kwai House: 63 cases; Nga Kwai House: 4 cases; Ha Kwai House: 13 cases; Chin Kwai House: 1 case; Yuk Kwai House: 2 cases; Hiu Kwai House: 1 case; Chui Kwai House: 2 cases; Luk Kwai House: 1 case; Pik Kwai House: 1 case; Chun Kwai House: 3 cases; Pak Kwai House: 1 case).

Also, further epidemiological investigations show that a family member of case 13512, i.e. 13148, is related to the cluster of Silka Seaview Hotel Hong Kong. According to the investigation results, the CHP reclassified the cases related to 13512, i.e. cases 13132 and 13255, to epidemiologically linked to imported case.

A total of 436 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 11 to 24). Two-hundred-and-eighty-three of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases, 16 are local cases, 26 are cases epidemiologically linked with local case, and the rest

are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the whole genome sequencing analysis of cases announced earlier conducted by the PHLSB confirmed that cases 13053, 13074, 13075, 13087, 13096, 13100 to 13104, 13107 to 13109, 13112, 13114, 13115, 13117, 13119, 13122, 13125, 13127, 13132 and 13146 all carried the Variant of Concern Omicron. Together with the aforementioned cases, there are so far 556 cases involving Omicron in Hong Kong.

Also, as a passenger flight (KL819) operated by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines arriving in Hong Kong from Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on January 21 had one passenger who tested positive upon arrival, and one passenger who failed to comply with the requirements specified under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), the DH thus invoked Cap. 599H to prohibit the landing of passenger flights from Amsterdam operated by KLM Royal Dutch Airlines in Hong Kong from January 25 to February 7.

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.

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.