

CHP investigates 8 576 confirmed and 4 567 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases with 12 883 cases pending status

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 27) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, February 27, the CHP was investigating 8 576 additional confirmed cases, 4 567 additional asymptomatic cases and 12 883 cases with pending case status in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 26 026 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 26 020 locally acquired cases. The CHP is continuing with epidemiological investigations on the cases.

In addition, the Government announced earlier that the review procedure by the 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. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 171 314 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

As at 4pm today, a total of 117 056 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus had been reported in the past 14 days (February 13 to 26), including 116 951 locally acquired cases and 105 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 26), the total number of confirmed cases was 60 275, while the figures for asymptomatic cases, re-positive cases, pending/unknown cases recorded since January 1 were 17 961, 10 and 60 709 respectively.

The Food and Health Bureau yesterday issued a press release to announce the arrangement of ending the home quarantine earlier for close contacts. With regard to home quarantine orders issued on or before February 27, close contacts who have received at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccines may conduct rapid antigen tests (RAT) on Day 6 and Day 7 of the home quarantine period. If they obtain negative test results during RATs on these two successive days (or any other subsequent two successive days), they may be deemed as fulfilling the condition of ending their quarantine early after obtaining the second negative results. The relevant home quarantine order can

be deemed as finished. The CHP will not provide written proof for individuals about their early-ending home quarantine. Conversely, if they obtain a positive test result during RAT, they will need to undergo isolation arrangement as cases tested positive.

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).