

CHP investigates 83 confirmed and 31 asymptomatic additional SARS-CoV-2 virus cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 2) announced the latest epidemic situation of COVID-19. As of 0.00am, February 2, the CHP was investigating 83 additional confirmed cases, 31 additional asymptomatic cases, and two cases with pending case category in the past 24 hours (i.e. there were 116 additional cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus confirmed by the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch (PHLSB) in those 24 hours). This brings the total number of confirmed cases to 13 912 so far, while the figures for asymptomatic cases and re-positive cases recorded since January 1 are 519 and nine respectively, i.e. Hong Kong has recorded a total of 14 442 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus so far.

The newly reported cases consist of 13 imported cases and 103 locally acquired cases (including 73 cases epidemiologically linked with previous cases). Ninety-eight of the cases involve mutant strains, the mutation test results of 15 cases are pending and the viral load of the remaining three cases is insufficient for mutation tests. Excluding the two cases with pending case category aforementioned, the patients comprise 50 males and 64 females, aged 3-month-old to 89. 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 1 260 cases that tested positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been reported in the past 14 days (January 19 to February 1). Six-hundred-and-seventy-one of them are epidemiologically linked with imported cases/possibly import-related, 99 are local cases, 276 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, adjacent yard area and shared pipes) were detected, to undergo quarantine at quarantine centre:

- Kwai Foon House, Kwai Fong Estate, Kwai Chung (involving four cases at two units of room 06 on different floors: residents of room 06 on 24th and 25th floor;
- Mei Sun Building, 4-20 Kau Hui Chik Street, Tai Po (involving five cases at two unit B on different floors): residents of unit B on 13 to 18th floor;

- Hing Ping House, Tai Hing Estate, Tuen Mun (involving six cases at three units of room 21 on different floors): residents of rooms 20 and 21 from 1st to 29th floors;

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.