

CHP investigates eight additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 21, the CHP was investigating eight additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 542 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 541 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases which involved mutant strains. The patients comprise seven males and one female, aged 11 to 61. One of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and the other seven arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk). Five patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and the remaining three tested positive during quarantine.

Among the above-mentioned cases, case 12541 involves a 54-year-old female patient, who lives at Block 18A, Serenity Villa, 230A Tai Po Tau, Tai Po. She tested negative in Hong Kong on December 15 and travelled to the United States (US) on December 16. She arrived in Hong Kong on December 19 from the US by flight CX881 and her specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested positive for COVID-19. The patient is asymptomatic and with a Ct value below 30. As a prudent measure, the places where she resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation period have been included in a compulsory testing notice on December 19. Specified persons who were present at the relevant venues at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on or before December 21.

A total of 67 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 7 to 20) and all of them are imported cases.

Furthermore, as the passenger flights (QR818) operated by Qatar Airways arriving in Hong Kong from Doha, Qatar, within a seven-day period (December 14 to 20) had five passengers confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing, the DH thus invoked the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to prohibit the landing of passenger flights from Doha operated by Qatar Airways in Hong Kong from December 22, 2021, to January 4, 2022.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "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, and there

are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."