

CHP investigates three additional confirmed cases of COVID-19 and positive test result on parcel external package

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, November 17, the CHP was investigating three additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 392 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 391 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases which involved mutant strains. The patients comprise two males and one female, aged between 21 to 45 years. Two of them arrived in Hong Kong from Group A specified places (high-risk) and one from a Group B specified place (medium-risk). One patient tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and one patient tested positive during quarantine. Case 12397 is a close contact of imported cases confirmed previously (case 12392 and 12393) and he tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre.

A total of 39 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (November 3 to 16) and all of them are imported cases.

Meanwhile, the CHP is investigating two suspected re-positive overseas cases. The first case involves a 29-year-old female who is a foreign domestic helper. She arrived in Hong Kong on October 15 from Indonesia by flight CX798. The specimen collected upon arrival at the TSCC tested negative for COVID-19. The results of six tests conducted during the compulsory quarantine period at the designated quarantine facility (Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre) were also negative. The patient has been asymptomatic. Upon completion of the compulsory quarantine on November 5, she returned to the residence of her employer at Block 4, New Jade Garden in Chai Wan. She underwent another test on November 15 at a community testing centre and the result was indeterminate. She tested positive for COVID-19 but with a low viral load (Ct value over 30) after admission to hospital. According to the information provided by the patient, she received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (CoronaVac) on July 14 and August 12 in Indonesia. She tested positive for COVID-19 on October 13 in Indonesia but tested negative in a confirmatory test on October 14. The CHP is verifying the relevant result with the Indonesian authority.

The other case involves a 65-year-old male. He arrived in Hong Kong on October 28 from Singapore by flight SQ882. The specimen collected upon arrival at the TSCC was negative for COVID-19. The results of four tests conducted during the compulsory quarantine period at a designated quarantine hotel (Regal Oriental Hotel) were also negative. The patient has been

asymptomatic. Upon completion of the compulsory quarantine on November 10, he returned to his residence at Tower 3, Ocean Court in Aberdeen. He underwent another test on November 15 as required and tested positive for COVID-19, and carries the L452R mutant strain (does not carry the N501Y or E484K mutant genes) but with a low viral load (Ct value over 30). According to the information provided by the patient, he received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Moderna) on April 1 and April 29 in Singapore and he tested positive for COVID-19 on October 14 in Singapore but tested negative in a confirmatory test on October 26. The CHP is verifying the relevant result with the Singaporean authority.

Based on the epidemiological, clinical and laboratory findings, the CHP considers that the two cases are compatible with re-positive cases. As a prudent measure, the places where the patients resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods have been included in a compulsory testing notice.

The CHP received a notification from the Health Commission of Guangdong Province last night (November 16) that the external package of a parcel sent to Hong Kong from the Mainland tested positive for COVID-19 during a routine check by Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and the parcel has arrived Hong Kong. They have asked for assistance in the investigation and follow up from Hong Kong.

The CHP has followed up on the place where the parcel is located. It is preliminarily confirmed that the parcel was sent from Inner Mongolia on November 7 and arrived at the address of the recipient in Hong Kong on November 13. The recipient has disposed of the external package immediately upon receipt of the parcel and had washed the clothes contained in the parcel. As a precautionary measure, the recipient was advised to maintain stringent hand hygiene at all times and carry out disinfection of the household surfaces which the parcel had contact with. The recipient was also requested to go for a COVID-19 test. As the parcel had stayed at a local logistics warehouse, the CHP has advised the warehouse operator to pay attention to the environmental disinfection routines, and has collected environmental samples at the warehouse, which all tested negative. Staff who might have had contact with the parcel were also requested to undergo tests.

In general, the COVID-19 virus cannot survive over a few days under a non-chilled environment, therefore the possibility of the concerned package carrying a transmissible live virus after arriving Hong Kong is relatively low. The CHP appeals to members of the public to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene and always keep hands clean when handling purchased goods, especially items imported to Hong Kong. They should wash and disinfect their hands after touching the goods, particularly before eating and touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

As a passenger flight (AI1314) operated by Air India arriving in Hong Kong from Dehli of India on November 14 had one passenger confirmed to have COVID-19 by arrival testing, and one passenger 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 Dehli operated by Air India in Hong Kong from November 17 to 30.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that 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).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the compulsory testing notice tomorrow (November 18):

- Block 4, New Jade Garden, 233 Chai Wan Road, Chai Wan

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)."