

Latest development of incident involving officials' attendance at banquet

A Government spokesperson today (January 9) said that, from among the cases tested preliminarily positive for SARS-CoV-2 virus announced by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today, one more person was found to have turned up at the banquet attended by various Government officials in the evening on January 3. For prudence, the 11 relevant Government officials with the quarantine orders lifted yesterday (January 8) will have to undergo home isolation using their own vacation leave and undergo multiple compulsory tests before resuming work.

The CHP of the DH yesterday said that, upon further investigation, the case previously tested positive that involved a 53-year-old woman having attended the above-mentioned banquet from 6pm to 8pm on January 3 is not a case of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection. It thus lifted the quarantine orders of those having left the banquet before 9.30pm that day, including 11 Government officials in total (i.e. seven Politically Appointed Officials and the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, two heads of departments who are civil servants, and one directorate civil servant who later informed the CHP of his attendance at the banquet).

The other three officials who attended the banquet after 9.30pm that day (i.e. the Secretary for Home Affairs, the Director of Immigration and the Political Assistant to the Secretary for Development) will continue to undergo quarantine in the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre.

The Government spokesperson said that as the CHP of the DH is still following up the case tested preliminarily positive as announced today, to minimise the risk of possible transmission, the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, has instructed the above-mentioned 11 Government officials to continue to undergo home isolation using their own vacation leave and undergo testing on January 10, 15 and 22 in accordance with the requirements of the compulsory testing notice issued by the CHP on January 7. They will resume duties after all the test results are confirmed to be negative. In the interim, the posting arrangements previously announced will continue to be in force to ensure that the daily operation of the Government will not be affected.

The Government spokesperson reiterated that the concerted efforts of the whole society are needed to fight the virus and that Government officials should lead by example, abide by the rules, stay vigilant and refrain from taking part in high-risk activities. On the instruction of the Chief Executive, the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, and the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Patrick Nip, are conducting investigations into the relevant officials' behaviours of attending the

banquet. After the investigations are completed, the Chief Executive will take appropriate actions against the relevant officials in an impartial manner.