

CHP updates quarantine arrangements of local COVID-19 cases with mutant strain

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (May 7) announced that following further analysis of epidemiological data of 11 patients of local confirmed COVID-19 cases with N501Y mutant strain, the risk of infection of their close contacts, and the testing results of the relevant compulsory testing orders and restriction-testing declarations, the CHP considers residents within the same building but not in the same unit with those confirmed cases need not be classified as close contacts and placed under quarantine for 21 days.

People currently placed under quarantine because they reside in the same building as N501Y cases will be tested again in quarantine centre. They will be released from quarantine centre if they have obtained a negative test result but will still be subject to compulsory testing on Days 3, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day on which the confirmed case left the relevant building. The DH will make relevant arrangements in an orderly manner according to their time of admission to the quarantine centre.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "The CHP has all along been following up on local cases with unknown sources to identify the possible source of infection and arrange immediate quarantine for close contacts of confirmed cases to stop further transmission. Recently, several cases involving N501Y mutant strain were recorded in the community, as N501Y mutant strain carry higher transmissibility, the CHP has to handle the quarantine arrangements of these cases more prudently."

At the same time, the CHP is also reviewing the infection control measures of confirmed cases involving mutant strain. According to the epidemiological findings so far, while case 11643 had acquired the infection during his quarantine in Ramada Hong Kong Grand in Tsim Sha Tsui, all the other 10 cases involving mutant strain were either imported (three cases) or epidemiologically linked to case 11643 (seven cases). The transmission among the epidemiologically linked cases to case 11643 is believed to have occurred among household and meal contacts. So far, available testing results of about 110 person who lived or worked in Parkes Building, where case 11643 resides in, were all negative under Day-19 testing in quarantine centre. Hence, there is no evidence suggesting transmission to other units in the same residential building rather than members of the same household.

Extensive compulsory testing has also been imposed in the community towards places visited by the cases through the issuing of Compulsory Testing Notices, and no other cases with unknown source have been detected. As such, there is so far no evidence of other chains of silent transmissions in the community given the absence of other locally acquired N501Y cases with

unknown source.

In view of the epidemiological evidence from contact tracing for N501Y cases, the CHP considers that residents who reside in the same building as confirmed N501Y cases, other than those who reside in the same unit, would not be classified as close contacts and placed under quarantine. Instead, they would be required to have more frequent testing due to the higher transmissibility of N501Y cases and hence an increased chance of transmission by sharing common facilities in the same building.

For N501Y case with unknown source, a restriction-testing declaration would be made towards the building on the day when a preliminary positive or confirmation result is returned. Household contacts and people living in the same subdivided unit as the confirmed case will be subject to 21 days quarantine. Besides, all residents in the building would be subjected to compulsory testing on Days 3, 7, 12 and 19 counting from the day on which the confirmed case left the building. Moreover, in case further cases are detected in the same building, all residents of the building would be classified as close contacts and placed under quarantine for 21 days as there would be evidence of transmission.

[Commission on Children convenes tenth meeting](#)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, chaired the tenth meeting of the Commission on Children today (May 7).

At the meeting, members were briefed on the key analyses of the Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report 2019 and the child poverty situation. Members noted that the existing support measures, including recurrent cash measures, non-recurrent cash measures and means-tested in-kind benefits, helped improve the livelihood of poor families with children.

Members also noted the array of measures in place to support families with children, such as the Working Family Allowance Scheme which has been enhanced continuously in recent years to provide better support for low income families, including its one-year time-limited special arrangement to relax the working hour requirements for non-single-parent households scheduled to take effect from the claim month of June 2021. Members also offered views on how to further ease intergenerational poverty.

Members were briefed on the parent education and family support provided by the Government for parents and children. Members noted that various family support measures had been stepped up to support at-risk families and families having children with special needs in particular, including the

launch of a pilot project to provide training and consultation services for children awaiting assessment and those assessed as having only mild developmental problems, the setting up of co-parenting support centres to support divorced families, and the enhancement of the social work service in pre-primary institutions as well as primary and secondary schools.

The Commission noted that the Law Reform Commission (LRC) released a consultation paper in 2019 proposing a new offence of failure to protect the child from death or serious harm. The Government would seriously consider the final report and recommendations to be announced by the LRC, and take appropriate follow up action.

The Commission took note of the work progress of its working groups, including the public engagement session on child abuse conducted online on April 14; the public engagement exercise on developing a central databank on children scheduled to be completed by end-May; and the next public engagement session on children's healthy development to be conducted in July tentatively. The Commission also noted that a number of projects funded by the 2019-20 Funding Scheme for Children's Well-being and Development had been completed, and that the next round of application would commence in mid-May.

Government announced the updated quarantine requirements for vaccinated close contacts of locally acquired COVID-19 cases

The Government today (May 7) announced the updated quarantine requirements for vaccinated close contacts of locally acquired COVID-19 cases. Taking into account the consensus interim recommendation by the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (collectively the JSC) under the CHP, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel (EAP), published today, as well as the latest local situations of the epidemic, the Government decided to adopt a progressive manner to adjust the relevant quarantine requirements for close contacts as follows starting from today:

For close contacts of locally acquired cases who do not have the N501Y mutant strain

The duration of compulsory quarantine can be shortened from 14 days of quarantine in a quarantine centre (QC) to seven days of quarantine in a QC, counting from the last day of exposure to the confirmed case (the day of last exposure is regarded as Day 0), provided the following three criteria have been satisfied:

- (a) documented proof of completion of two doses of CoronaVac or BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines, and that 14 days have passed from the date of receiving the second dose#; and
- (b) results of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) of the respiratory specimens taken on Day 0 or Day 1 after admission to a QC being negative; and
- (c) positive immunoglobulin G (IgG) or total antibody against SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, or positive surrogate neutralising antibody, taken after admission to a QC.

After completing the seven-day quarantine, the close contact will be subject to seven days of self-monitoring, and to compulsory testing at a community testing centre (CTC) on Day 12.

For close contacts of locally acquired cases detected to have the N501Y mutant strain

The duration of quarantine in a QC can be shortened from 21 days to 14 days after the last day of exposure plus seven days of self-monitoring, counting from the last day of exposure to the confirmed case, and they are also subject to compulsory testing at a CTC on Day 19, provided the following three criteria have been satisfied:

- (a) documented proof of completion of two doses of CoronaVac or BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines, and that 14 days have passed from the date of receiving the second dose#; and
- (b) results of PCR testing of the respiratory specimens taken on Day 0 or Day 1 after admission to a QC, and those taken on Day 7 and Day 12 after last exposure to the confirmed case, being all negative; and
- (c) positive IgG or total antibody against SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, or positive surrogate neutralising antibody, taken after admission to a QC.

The following persons are regarded as satisfying criteria (a):

- 1) close contacts who had documented past infection of COVID-19 within nine months after discharge; or
 - 2) close contacts who had documented past infection of COVID-19 more than nine months after discharge plus one dose of CoronaVac or BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, and for whom 14 days have passed from the date of receiving the dose.
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Improper remarks on sentences meted out by court condemned

The Department of Justice issued the following statement today (May 7) in response to some improper remarks on sentences meted out by the District Court on May 6.

We take exception to the ridiculous remarks made by certain individuals. The four defendants in the case pleaded guilty to a charge under the Public Order Ordinance for knowingly taking part in an unauthorised assembly. The laws of Hong Kong respect and protect the rights and freedoms as provided for under the Basic Law. However, it has been held that such rights and freedoms are not absolute and may be subject to restrictions which are, amongst others, in the interests of public order (ordre public) and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

In imposing the sentences, the judge stated the sentencing principles in open court. With due process observed, there is a well-established and fair appeal mechanism whereby any dissatisfaction over the sentences ought to be taken up by means of an appeal. Any absurd demand for their immediate release not only disrespects the rule of law but is also seen as an attempt to meddle in Hong Kong's affairs.

Members of the public should refrain from making any unsubstantiated accusations against the judicial and legal systems. Also, no one should comment arbitrarily on cases in respect of which legal proceedings are ongoing as the matter is sub judice.

Man sentenced for breaching compulsory quarantine order

A 37-year-old man was sentenced to immediate imprisonment for five weeks by the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (May 7) for violating the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) (the Regulation) and "Assaulting police officers in the due execution of their duty" under the Offences against the Person Ordinance (Section 36(b) of Cap. 212).

The man was earlier issued a compulsory quarantine order stating that he must conduct quarantine at a hotel for 21 days. Before the expiry of the quarantine order, he left the place of quarantine on March 20, 2021, without reasonable excuse nor permission given by an authorised officer. The man was then conveyed to the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (QC) on the same date for

serving the remaining quarantine period. However, the man escaped from and attempted to escape from the QC on March 24 and 27 respectively. The man also assaulted a police officer when being intercepted at the QC on March 27, 2021. He was charged with three counts of contravening sections 8(1) and 8(5) of the Regulation and one count of "Assaulting police officers in the due execution of their duty" under Cap. 212. He was sentenced by the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today to immediate imprisonment for a total of five weeks

Breaching a quarantine order is a criminal offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. A spokesman for the Department of Health said the sentence sends a clear message to the community that breaching a compulsory quarantine order is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate, and solemnly reminded the public to comply with the regulations. As of today, a total of 134 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching compulsory quarantine orders and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to 14 weeks or a fine of up to \$15,000. The spokesman reiterated that resolute actions will be taken against anyone who has breached the relevant regulations.