

## DH urges unvaccinated people to take immediate actions as influenza activity remains elevated

The Controller of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health, Dr Edwin Tsui, today (February 14) reminded members of the public that the seasonal influenza activity in Hong Kong remains at a high level, and the influenza season will continue for some time. All sectors of the community should remain vigilant and enhance personal hygiene and protection measures against influenza. All persons aged 6 months and above (except those with known contraindications) who have not yet received the seasonal influenza vaccination (SIV) should act immediately to protect their health and that of their family members.

According to the CHP's latest surveillance data, in the week ending February 8, the percentage of respiratory specimens testing positive for seasonal influenza viruses is 10.23 per cent. The influenza admission rate in public hospitals is 0.67 cases per 10 000 population, indicating that the overall influenza activity remains at a high level.

"Hong Kong entered the influenza season in early January this year, and it is now the sixth week. The Influenza A (H1) virus is predominant this season, accounting for nearly 90 per cent of the subtyped influenza virus detections. In terms of severe or death cases caused by influenza, this season, as in the past, mainly affects the elderly and young children," Dr Tsui said.

As of February 12, the CHP recorded 301 severe or death cases among adult patients. About 70 per cent of them have not received SIV of this season, and about 70 per cent of them have chronic diseases. Among the 186 death cases, about 90 per cent of them were aged 65 or above. For children, nine cases of severe influenza-associated complications were recorded this season. Seven (including two preschool children and five school children) of them had not received SIV of this season, and two cases had chronic diseases.

"The number of severe or death cases recorded in the first five weeks of this season is higher than that of the same period last season, but similar to the 2018/19 influenza season, i.e. before the COVID-19 pandemic, which was also dominated by influenza A (H1). Based on historical data, the entire influenza season usually lasts for two to four months. Whether it will last for 28 weeks, as in the past influenza season, will depend on any change in the circulating strains of viruses, including any increase in the activities of influenza A (H3) and influenza B viruses," Dr Tsui said.

He pointed out that, according to the virus analysis conducted by the CHP, the strains of influenza viruses that are circulating in Hong Kong nowadays are similar to the strains of viruses in the seasonal influenza

vaccine currently available in Hong Kong, which means that the vaccine is effective in lowering the risk of serious complications or death from the infection. Data analysis also showed that the rate of serious complications in residents of residential care homes for the elderly who did not receive SIV was 2.2 times that of vaccinated residents, highlighting the protective effect of SIV.

As of February 9, a total of about 1 975 100 doses of vaccines were administered under various vaccination programmes, an increase of about 8.4 per cent over the same period in the last SIV season and a record high, surpassing the total number of doses administered under various vaccination programmes in the year 2023/24 (i.e. about 1 873 000 doses).

The number of schools participating in the SIV School Outreach Programme has also increased significantly this year. About 1 020 kindergartens/child care centres (97 per cent), about 640 primary schools (98 per cent) and about 490 secondary schools (98 per cent) have completed or are arranging SIV school outreach activities. This is higher than the participation rate in year 2023/24, i.e. 80 per cent of kindergartens/child care centres, 95 per cent of primary schools and 70 per cent of secondary schools.

"The SIV coverage rate for children aged 6 months to under 2 years remains relatively low at about 22.5 per cent. Although slightly higher than that of the same period in the last SIV season, the coverage rate was still lower than that of other age groups of children. To enhance relevant vaccination services and boost the vaccination rate, the Government has opened the DH's Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) to all children aged 6 months to under 2 years. For the sake of the children's health, parents are advised to make appointments via the online booking system as soon as possible for children aged 6 months to under 2 years who have not yet received SIV to be vaccinated at the designated MCHCs," Dr Tsui said.

He also reminded parents not to believe in alternative therapies circulating on the Internet that claim to prevent and cure influenza in infants and young children. There is no scientific evidence to support such claims. SIV is one of the most effective ways to prevent seasonal influenza and its complications, while significantly reducing the risk of hospitalisation and death from seasonal influenza for infants and young children. Children who develop symptoms of respiratory infection, even if mild, should consult a doctor as soon as possible to avoid any delay in management.

For the more information, members of the public are welcome to visit the CHP's [seasonal influenza](#) and [COVID-19 & Flu Express](#) webpages.

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# First patient transferred point to point from Macao to Hong Kong for treatment by direct cross-boundary ambulance transfer in GBA

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (February 14) that Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) has received the third patient today under the Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-boundary Ambulance Transfer in the Greater Bay Area (Pilot Scheme). The patient was transferred from Macao to Hong Kong for treatment by a point-to-point cross-boundary ambulance. This marks the first time since the launch of the Pilot Scheme that a patient has been transferred from Macao to Hong Kong for treatment. The HA expresses sincere gratitude to various units in Macao and Hong Kong for their proactive co-ordination and collaboration, which ensured a smooth and safe cross-border transfer process for the patient.

The 79-year-old male Hong Kong resident suffers from atrial fibrillation and requires respiratory support through a ventilator due to pneumonia complications and a persistent fever. He was admitted to Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário in Macao for treatment. The patient's condition was slightly stabilised after treatment. After a thorough assessment of the patient's overall clinical condition and discussion with the patient and his family by the medical team, it was confirmed that the patient was fit for transferring back to Hong Kong for ongoing treatment. The point-to-point cross-boundary ambulance carrying the patient departed from Centro Hospitalar Conde de São Januário in Macao before 11am. The ambulance travelled via the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macao Bridge and arrived at noon at PMH, where the patient is currently receiving treatment.

The spokesperson for the HA stated that upon receiving notification, PMH promptly communicated with the medical team in Macao to understand the patient's clinical situation and prepare for admitting the patient. The HA expresses heartfelt thanks to all parties involved for their substantial co-ordination and co-operation, ensuring that the patient was swiftly transported directly point to point to Hong Kong for treatment under the care of medical personnel and a relative of the patient. Without the handover of patients between ambulances at boundary control points, the direct transport not only minimises the risks posed to patients during transfers but also improves patients' chances of recovery.

A study on the provision of land-based cross-boundary transfers for non-emergency and non-critically ill patients and an exploration of rolling out a pilot co-operation scheme for cross-boundary referrals of patients between designated public hospitals have been put forward in the Outline Development

Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The Chief Executive also put forward in his 2023 Policy Address the initiative to explore cross-boundary ambulance transfer arrangements between hospitals in the GBA. Under the staunch support and guidance of various national ministries as well as the concerted efforts of government departments of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao, the Pilot Scheme was set for official launch on November 30 last year. The first and second patients were transferred point to point from Shenzhen to Hong Kong for treatment by direct cross-boundary ambulance on January 10 and January 27 this year respectively.

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## Analytical Accounts of Exchange Fund

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) released today (February 14) the key analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund at the end of January 2025.

Foreign assets, representing the external assets of the Exchange Fund, increased during the month by HK\$8.1 billion to HK\$3,486.5 billion.

The Monetary Base, comprising Certificates of Indebtedness, Government-issued currency notes and coins in circulation, the balance of the banking system and Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued, amounted to HK\$1,995.0 billion.

Claims on the private sector in Hong Kong amounted to HK\$354.0 billion.

Foreign liabilities amounted to HK\$23.9 billion.

The analytical accounts of the Exchange Fund are released in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and are referred to as the Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank under SDDS (Annex).

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At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's SDDS. The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of February 2025, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

February 7 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
February 14	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)
February 28	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
February 28	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

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## [Hong Kong's trade in services statistics for 2023](#)

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (February 14) the Hong Kong's trade in services (TIS) statistics for 2023, with detailed breakdowns by service component and by main destination/source.

Comparing 2023 with 2022, the value of total exports of services rose by 17.2% to \$762.2 billion, and that of total imports of services increased by 24.9% to \$618.4 billion. An invisible trade surplus at \$143.8 billion, equivalent to 23.3% of the value of total imports of services, was recorded in 2023. This was smaller than the corresponding surplus of \$155.4 billion in 2022, equivalent to 31.4% of the value of total imports of services in 2022.

### Analysis by service component

Analysed by service component, transport was the largest component in exports of services, accounting for 30.8% of the value of total exports of services in 2023. This was followed by financial services (25.7%) and travel (21.4%).

As for imports of services, travel accounted for 28.7% of the value of total imports of services in 2023, followed by transport (22.7%) and other business services (15.8%).

Amongst various service components, the net exports of financial services contributed most significantly to the overall invisible trade surplus, at \$132.4 billion in 2023. This was followed by transport (\$94.2 billion) and other business services (\$16.5 billion).

On the other hand, manufacturing services imported by Hong Kong in outward processing were substantial, resulting in a deficit of \$85.3 billion in 2023. This was followed by travel (\$14.3 billion) and charges for the use of intellectual property (\$8.8 billion).

### Analysis by main destination/source

The mainland of China (the Mainland) and the United States of America (the USA) were the top two main destinations of exports of services of Hong Kong, accounting for 29.8% and 19.2% respectively of the value of total exports of services in 2023. They were followed by the United Kingdom (the UK) (10.2%), Singapore (5.0%) and Taiwan (3.8%).

The Mainland and the USA were also the top two main sources of imports of services, accounting for 39.0% and 12.4% respectively of the value of total imports of services in 2023. They were followed by Japan (7.7%), the UK (7.0%) and Singapore (5.3%).

Analysed by region, Asia was the most important destination of the exports of services of Hong Kong, accounting for 51.6% of the value of total exports of services in 2023, followed by North America (21.0%) and Western Europe (20.9%).

For imports of services, Asia was also the most important source, accounting for 66.1% of the value of total imports of services in 2023, followed by Western Europe (14.5%) and North America (14.3%).

#### Further information

Table 1 presents exports, imports and net exports of services by service component in 2022 and 2023.

Table 2 presents exports of services by main destination and imports of services by main source in 2022 and 2023.

Table 3 presents exports, imports and net exports of services by region of destination/source in 2022 and 2023.

More detailed TIS statistics will be given in the report "Hong Kong Trade in Services Statistics in 2023". Users can browse and download this report at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020011&scode=240](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020011&scode=240)) as from end-February 2025.

The TIS statistics have incorporated the latest international recommendations given in the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010. For details, please refer to the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode240.html](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode240.html)). They are compiled mainly based on data obtained from the Annual Survey of Imports and Exports of Services conducted by the C&SD, supplemented by data from other relevant sources. The TIS statistics for 2023 are subject to minor revision when more data from supplementary sources become available.

For enquiries about TIS statistics, please contact the Trade in Services Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7415; email: [tis@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:tis@censtatd.gov.hk)).

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## **Tentative issuance schedule for Exchange Fund Bills and Notes**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) issued today (February 14) a tentative issuance schedule for Exchange Fund Bills and Notes (EFBNs) for the coming quarter of April to June 2025. The schedule contains information on the tentative tender dates, issue sizes and issue dates of individual issues, representing rollover of maturing issues and taking into account planned adjustments to the maturity spectrum of the EFBN portfolio.

The quarterly schedule is issued in the second month of each quarter (i.e. February, May, August and November), covering the EFBN tenders in the following quarter.

It should be noted that the tender dates, issue sizes and issue dates projected in the advance issuance schedule are tentative. The details of new issues of Exchange Fund Bills are to be confirmed and announced at least four business days prior to the respective tender dates. The details of new issues of Exchange Fund Notes are to be confirmed and announced seven business days prior to their respective tender dates. The HKMA may make changes in the light of prevailing market conditions.