

CHP investigates case of Shiga toxin-producing E. coli infection

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (April 27) investigating a case of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) infection, and hence reminded the public to maintain good personal, food and environmental hygiene against intestinal infections.

The case involves a 6-year-old boy with good past health, who has presented with fever, vomiting, abdominal pain and diarrhoea since April 15. He was admitted to a private hospital on the same day and was discharged on April 17. The patient has been in a stable condition all along.

His stool specimen grew STEC upon laboratory testing.

Initial enquiries of the CHP revealed that the patient had no travel history during the incubation period. Investigations are ongoing.

"Escherichia coli (E. coli) is a bacterium that is commonly found in the gut of humans and warm-blooded animals. Most strains of E. coli are harmless. Some strains, however, such as STEC, can produce powerful toxins and cause severe food-borne disease. The most recognised serogroup of STEC is E. coli O157:H7," a spokesman for the CHP explained.

Preventive measures for STEC infection are similar to those recommended for other food-borne diseases. The public are advised to observe good personal and food hygiene:

- Adopt the 5 Keys to Food Safety in handling food, i.e. Choose (choose safe raw materials), Clean (keep hands and utensils clean), Separate (separate raw and cooked food), Cook (cook thoroughly) and Safe Temperature (keep food at a safe temperature) to prevent food-borne diseases;
- Wash hands properly with liquid soap and water before handling food, after handling raw meat or poultry and before eating, and after going to the toilet or changing diapers;
- Cook food and boil water thoroughly before consumption. When cooking or reheating, the core temperature of the food should reach at least 75 degrees Celsius;
- Avoid consumption of unpasteurised milk or undercooked food; and
- Consult your doctor immediately if you have symptoms of STEC infection, particularly bloody diarrhoea.

The public may visit the CHP's [STEC page](#) for more information.

LawTech Fund to open for applications on April 28 (with photo)

The Government has established a LawTech Fund (the Fund) under the Anti-epidemic Fund to assist some small and medium-size law firms and barristers' chambers in procuring and upgrading information technology systems and arranging for their staff to attend lawtech training courses. The Fund will be open for application starting tomorrow (April 28). Eligible law firms and chambers can each be given a reimbursement amount of up to \$50,000.

The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association will establish a Joint Committee to process and assess the applications for the Fund, as well as to arrange the disbursement of the funding. It is expected to benefit more than 60 per cent of law firms and more than 50 per cent of barristers' chambers (a total of about 700 firms/chambers) in Hong Kong.

Eligibility and application arrangements:

- Applications will be accepted from April 28, 2020 (for two months);
- The law firm or chamber must have five or fewer practising lawyers as at April 8, 2020 (announcement of the Fund), and at the time of granting the subsidy;
- The reimbursable amount is capped at \$50,000 for each law firm or chamber;
- Subsidies must be used for procuring and upgrading information technology systems (including but not confined to video-conferencing facilities); and
- "Lawtech training" refers to the relevant training recognised and approved by the Joint Committee.

The application form and the guidance notes are available at the homepages of the Law Society of Hong Kong (www.hklawsoc.org.hk) and the Hong Kong Bar Association (www.hkba.org/covid-19/lawtech-fund).

The Secretary for Justice in her blog has given an outline of the Fund and discussed lawtech (www.doj.gov.hk/eng/public/blog/20200411_blog1.html).

The Department of Justice expressed its appreciation to the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association for their practical assistance and close partnership in processing the applications and disbursement of subsidies to benefit eligible law firms and barristers' chambers as soon as practicable.



Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (April 27), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 15 patients (nine male and six female, aged 17 months to 87 years) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 268 patients under isolation currently. So far, 787 patients who had COVID-19 confirmed or probable infections have been discharged upon recovery.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Tenders to be held on May 5

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

Tenders to be held on May 5:

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Tender date | : May 5, 2020 |
| Paper on offer | : EF Bills |
| Issue number | : Q2019 |

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Issue date | : May 6, 2020 |
| Maturity date | : August 5, 2020 |
| Tenor | : 91 Days |
| Amount on offer | : HK\$36,920 MN |
| ***** | |
| Tender date | : May 5, 2020 |
| Paper on offer | : EF Bills |
| Issue number | : H2048 |
| Issue date | : May 6, 2020 |
| Maturity date | : November 4, 2020 |
| Tenor | : 182 Days |
| Amount on offer | : HK\$15,000 MN |

External merchandise trade statistics for March 2020

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (April 27) the external merchandise trade statistics for March 2020. In March 2020, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 5.8% and 11.1% respectively.

In March 2020, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 5.8% over a year earlier to \$323.6 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 4.3% in February 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 11.1% over a year earlier to \$358.4 billion in March 2020, after a year-on-year decrease of 0.1% in February 2020. A visible trade deficit of \$34.7 billion, equivalent to 9.7% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in March 2020.

For the first quarter of 2020 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 9.7% over the same period in 2019. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 10.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$103.8 billion, equivalent to 11.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first quarter of 2020.

Comparing the first quarter of 2020 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 9.8%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 5.7%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing March 2020 with March 2019, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 3.2%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular the mainland of China

(the Mainland) (+8.4%), Vietnam (+1.2%) and Taiwan (+0.9%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (-17.2%), Thailand (-15.6%) and Singapore (-14.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the United Kingdom (-34.2%), Germany (-33.1%) and the USA (-29.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular the USA (-29.5%), Malaysia (-19.6%), the Mainland (-14.1%) and the Philippines (-10.3%). Concurrently, increases were recorded in the values of imports from Vietnam (+24.0%), Singapore (+9.8%) and Taiwan (+9.7%).

For the first quarter of 2020 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular the USA (-27.4%), Germany (-26.4%), Japan (-17.9%) and Singapore (-15.5%). The value of total exports to the Mainland also decreased by 1.8%. However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to Vietnam (+3.0%) and Taiwan (+1.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular the USA (-19.0%), the Mainland (-16.9%), Malaysia (-7.8%) and Thailand (-6.0%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from Vietnam (+34.4%), Taiwan (+15.0%), Korea (+12.1%) and Singapore (+7.5%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing March 2020 with March 2019, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$13.6 billion or -62.2%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$12.3 billion or -19.4%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$3.7 billion or -20.8%). However, increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$10.4 billion or 8.0%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$3.1 billion or 9.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$10.2 billion or -16.6%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$7.2 billion or -40.3%) and "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$6.8 billion or -4.4%). However, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$2.0 billion or 25.9%).

For the first quarter of 2020 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were

registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$34.0 billion or -19.7%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$16.5 billion or -37.2%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$10.5 billion or -20.4%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$7.2 billion or 2.1%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$5.8 billion or 34.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$26.8 billion or -16.6%), "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$23.4 billion or -45.6%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$13.5 billion or -15.9%). However, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$9.3 billion or 43.7%) and "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$8.4 billion or 2.2%).

Commentary

A government spokesman said that merchandise exports remained weak in March, falling by 5.8% from a year earlier in value terms. While exports to the Mainland rebounded alongside the gradual resumption of economic activities there, exports to many other major markets, including the US and EU, plunged further.

Looking ahead, as COVID-19 has spread across the world since March and caused a severe contraction of global economic activity, Hong Kong's merchandise exports will remain under notable pressure in the near term. The Government will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for March 2020. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2017 to March 2020, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for March 2020 are shown in Table 4, whereas the values of imports of goods from 10 main suppliers are given in Table 5.

Tables 6 and 7 show the values of total exports and imports of 10 principal commodity divisions for March 2020.

All the merchandise trade statistics described here are measured at current prices and no account has been taken of changes in prices between the

periods of comparison. A separate analysis of the volume and price movements of external merchandise trade for March 2020 will be released in mid-May 2020.

The March 2020 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in March 2020 and will be available in mid-May 2020. Users can download the publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp230.jsp).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section (2) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 5042).