

External merchandise trade statistics for May 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (June 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for May 2018. In May 2018, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 15.9% and 16.5% respectively.

In May 2018, the value of total exports of goods increased by 15.9% over a year earlier to \$351.4 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 8.1% in April 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 16.5% over a year earlier to \$394.6 billion in May 2018, after a year-on-year increase of 11.1% in April 2018. A visible trade deficit of \$43.2 billion, equivalent to 11.0% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in May 2018.

For the first five months of 2018 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods rose by 10.7% over the same period in 2017. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 11.9%. A visible trade deficit of \$219.8 billion, equivalent to 11.9% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first five months of 2018.

Comparing the three-month period ending May 2018 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 3.5%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 4.0%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing May 2018 with May 2017, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 15.8%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Singapore (+43.9%), Malaysia (+43.6%), the Philippines (+25.5%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+19.2%), Thailand (+18.6%) and Japan (+13.0%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to India (-21.7%) and Taiwan (-1.9%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular Germany (+16.7%), the USA (+12.5%) and the United Kingdom (+6.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+69.7%), Korea (+44.1%), Taiwan (+22.3%), Singapore (+20.3%), the Philippines (+18.8%) and the Mainland (+18.4%). Concurrently, a decrease was registered in the value of imports from India (-39.5%).

For the first five months of 2018 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in

particular Singapore (+16.9%), the Mainland (+14.0%), Germany (+12.8%), Taiwan (+12.2%), the USA (+9.4%) and Thailand (+7.1%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports to India (-20.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+91.2%), Korea (+21.8%), Taiwan (+18.1%), the Philippines (+10.4%), the Mainland (+10.4%) and Singapore (+8.4%). On the other hand, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports from India (-21.4%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing May 2018 with May 2017, increases were registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$24.8 billion or 22.8%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$9.8 billion or 32.7%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$5.6 billion or 10.0%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$2.0 billion or -13.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$30.3 billion or 25.3%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$10.0 billion or 38.5%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$5.3 billion or 10.0%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$1.3 billion or -5.5%).

For the first five months of 2018 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$102.5 billion or 20.0%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$32.5 billion or 22.0%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$18.0 billion or 23.1%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$13.6 billion or -15.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$109.9 billion or 18.8%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$35.3 billion or 28.2%) and "petroleum, petroleum products and related materials" (by \$8.0 billion or 27.1%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$2.3 billion or -0.8%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman noted that external trade sustained robust performance so far in 2018, thanks to sturdy global demand. Merchandise exports continued to grow strongly over a year earlier in May, with many major markets showing double-digit gains.

The spokesman commented further that, looking ahead, the current momentum of the global economy should remain supportive to Hong Kong's exports in the near term. Yet, external uncertainties have increased markedly of late, as a result of the escalation of trade conflicts between the US and the Mainland. This might weigh on the prevailing global economic sentiment and trade expansion going forward. 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 May 2018. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2015 to May 2018, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for May 2018 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 May 2018.

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 May 2018 will be released in mid-July 2018.

The May 2018 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in May 2018 and will be available in mid-July 2018. 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).