

Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade in December 2019

Further to the external merchandise trade statistics in value terms for December 2019 released earlier on, the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (February 18) the volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for that month.

In December 2019, the volume of Hong Kong's total exports of goods increased by 3.8% over December 2018, while the volume of imports of goods decreased by 2.0%.

Comparing 2019 with 2018, the volume of Hong Kong's total exports of goods and imports of goods decreased by 5.0% and 7.6% respectively.

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2019 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the volume of total exports of goods increased by 1.7%, while the volume of imports of goods decreased by 0.4%.

Changes in volume of external merchandise trade are derived from changes in external merchandise trade value with the effect of price changes discounted.

Comparing December 2019 with December 2018, the prices of total exports of goods decreased by 0.4%, while the prices of imports of goods increased by 0.2%.

As regards price changes in 2019 over 2018, the prices of total exports of goods and imports of goods increased by 1.1% and 1.3% respectively.

Price changes in external merchandise trade are reflected by changes in unit value indices of external merchandise trade, which are compiled based on average unit values or, for certain commodities, specific price data.

The terms of trade index is derived from the ratio of price index of total exports of goods to that of imports of goods. Compared with the same periods in 2018, the index decreased by 0.7% in December 2019 and 0.1% in 2019 as a whole.

Changes in the unit value and volume of total exports of goods by main destination are shown in Table 1.

Comparing December 2019 with December 2018, a double-digit increase of 15.2% was recorded for the total export volume to the mainland of China (the Mainland). Concurrently, the total export volume to Taiwan (9.7%) and India (8.0%) also increased. On the other hand, double-digit declines were recorded for the total export volume to Japan (-13.5%) and the USA (-21.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, the total export prices to Taiwan (-1.8%), India (-1.6%), Japan (-0.4%) and the USA (-0.1%) decreased. On the other hand, the total export prices to the Mainland increased by 0.3%.

Changes in the unit value and volume of imports of goods by main supplier are shown in Table 2.

Comparing December 2019 with December 2018, the import volume from the Mainland decreased by 5.0%. On the other hand, the import volume from Japan (4.8%), Korea (6.3%), Singapore (7.7%) and Taiwan (24.2%) increased.

Over the same period of comparison, the import prices from Japan (0.8%) and the Mainland (0.4%) increased. On the other hand, the import prices from Singapore (-0.8%), Korea (-1.2%) and Taiwan (-2.4%) decreased.

Further information

Details of the above statistics are published in the December 2019 issue of "Hong Kong Merchandise Trade Index Numbers". Users can download the publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp230.jsp?productCode=B1020006).

Enquiries on merchandise trade indices may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4918).

Special sale arrangements for monthly parking tickets of seven government car parks managed by TD for March

To reduce the risk of the spread of the novel coronavirus in the community, the Transport Department (TD) said today (February 18) that special arrangements will be implemented for the sale of monthly tickets for March at the seven government car parks under the management of the TD.

"The existing holders of a monthly ticket for private car/van, motorcycle or taxi for February can purchase a monthly ticket for the same vehicle type for March with priority. These eligible monthly ticket holders have to complete the procedures for purchasing the monthly ticket for March by 9pm on February 22 at the shroff office of the car park concerned. Any such person who fails to purchase the monthly ticket before the above deadline will be regarded as having given up his or her right to purchase the monthly ticket for March. The unsold monthly tickets for private car/van for March will be sold at the shroff offices of the car parks concerned on a first-come, first-served basis from 7.30am on February 23 while the unsold monthly tickets for motorcycles and taxis for March will be sold at the

shroff offices from 7.30am on February 24," a spokesman for the TD said.

The seven government car parks are Star Ferry Car Park, City Hall Car Park, Tin Hau Car Park, Shau Kei Wan Car Park, Aberdeen Car Park, Kwai Fong Car Park and Tsuen Wan Car Park.

The car park operators will put up notices in the car parks in advance to inform motorists of the above special arrangements.

Subject to the latest situation of the novel coronavirus, the TD will review the sale arrangements for monthly parking tickets for April and make a further announcement as necessary.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 is 107.3 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

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

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date	: February 18, 2020
Paper on offer	: EF Bills
Issue number	: Q2008
Issue date	: February 19, 2020
Maturity date	: May 20, 2020
Amount applied	: HK\$148,795 MN
Amount allotted	: HK\$52,075 MN
Average yield accepted	: 1.62 PCT
Highest yield accepted	: 1.63 PCT
Pro rata ratio	: About 91 PCT
Average tender yield	: 1.66 PCT

Tender date	: February 18, 2020
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Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2037
Issue date : February 19, 2020
Maturity date : August 19, 2020
Amount applied : HK\$45,175 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$14,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.65 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.68 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 51 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.71 PCT

Tender date : February 18, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y2086
Issue date : February 19, 2020
Maturity date : February 17, 2021
Amount applied : HK\$10,750 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$1,300 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.58 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.59 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 33 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.69 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning February 24:

Tender date : February 25, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2009
Issue date : February 26, 2020
Maturity date : May 27, 2020
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$46,066 MN

Tender date : February 25, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2038
Issue date : February 26, 2020

Maturity date	: August 26, 2020
Tenor	: 182 Days
Amount on offer	: HK\$13,000 MN

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (February 18):

Reporter: Firstly, on the Hong Kong people on the Diamond Princess cruise, what are the officials' difficulty in trying to contact the remaining ten of them? You mentioned they failed to contact ten, and do you know if anyone has already refused to go back home with the flights that you have arranged? And secondly, for the stranded people in Hubei Province, what has prevented from doing the same measure, like the Diamond Princess, and taking back home and arranging the same thing for them? Thirdly, in pressing ahead to use Chun Yeung Estate as a new quarantine centre, would you worry more protests to come and many accuse that you haven't consulted them earlier. How would you make up them? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Again three questions. First of all, the Immigration Department has deployed staff to try to reach every one of the 352 Hong Kong residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise. Up till now, my latest information is there are ten outstanding residents. We will continue to reach out to them as long as they have a contact but I understand that maybe one or two don't even have a contact. Another means to do it is through the cruise company because these people are on the cruise and the cruise company and the crew are still serving them, so we have asked the cruise company to help us to reach out to them. We are sending them letters. I'm going to send each of them a letter today to tell them exactly the arrangements that we have put in place.

At the moment, through the phone contacts we have received a certain number of residents' initial response, which is perhaps they don't want to take the charter flight, but I feel that we need to explain more fully what is the consequence of not taking the charter flight. For example, they may not realise that if they don't take this charter flight and they disembark, they think they could board a commercial flight and come back to Hong Kong, one is they may have difficulty in getting a commercial flight ticket because if people know they come from this cruise, then there may be some worries. Secondly is even if they manage to take a commercial flight back, upon arrival at the Hong Kong International Airport, they will be stopped by the Immigration Department because they will be put on this sort of watch list

and our Port Health officials will then approach them and will likewise serve a quarantine order. They will end up in the same situation, but with travelling arrangements being done all by themselves. So I hope that, with that fuller explanation, those who have expressed some reservations about using our service, and by the way it is a free service that we are rolling out, will reconsider and let our Immigration Department know their exact decision because we need the decision pretty early so that we can arrange the transport and so on.

The second question about Hubei, I have to stress that whether Hong Kong residents are facing distress in the Mainland or overseas, we accord the same importance and attention to them. But there are different circumstances and the whole Hubei Province is now still in a very critical stage of dealing with this epidemic, and all the public transport has been stopped and it would be very difficult to arrange local transport and so on. We are not giving up at all. We are still working very hard on trying to come up with a plan and to get the relevant authorities to support us in taking forward that plan but ultimately it is the safety, the health of our Hong Kong residents that are of paramount importance. Meanwhile, if they need any drugs, any support, this has been arranged through very special arrangements. I understand some Hong Kong residents in Hubei, whether it's Wuhan or another city, have already received their first batch of drugs from this special arrangement.

As far as the Chun Yeung Estate which will serve as an additional quarantine centre, this is absolutely essential because at the moment the four centres that we have in total provide only about 150 places. This Diamond Princess alone will bring back about 300 to the maximum, 300-something residents, who require compulsory quarantine in a centre which is guarded. They could not have quarantine at home because of the risk involved. So we need this additional facility and since the news went out about the use of this facility, we have already arranged the law enforcement bodies, basically the Police, to guard the estate because we, I mean Hong Kong, could not afford not to have this centre. We could not afford this centre to be vandalised and destroyed by rioters. We will do all we could to protect this estate and I hope residents in the vicinity – and by the way it is actually in the Fo Tan Industrial Estate, it's not right in the midst of the residential area – I hope residents around will accept this arrangement which is of benefit to the whole society.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)