

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (March 25), 30 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. Including a patient (case number: 11417) discharged earlier on March 23, a total of 10 994 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged so far.

At present, there are 662 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 202 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 191 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 22 public hospitals and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, among which 10 patients are in critical condition, eight are in serious condition and the remaining 173 patients are in stable condition.

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.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	6547, 11161, 11162, 11172, 11180, 11186, 11201, 11205, 11219, 11230, 11247, 11249, 11250, 11254, 11258, 11269, 11275, 11277, 11290, 11303, 11311, 11314, 11332, 11341, 11362, 11371, 11375, 11395, 11416, 11417, 11418
Critical	1989, 3496, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9612, 9907, 10358, 10942
Serious	6386, 7468, 8221, 9055, 9135, 10984, 11040, 11055

USED commends Qualifications Framework partners (with photos)

The Under Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, today (March 25) officiated at the Qualifications Framework (QF) Partnerships Commendation Ceremony and QF in Action (QFIA) Launch Ceremony, and presented certificates of commendation to over 250 organisations including enterprises, industry-related trade associations and unions, professional bodies, government departments, and public organisations for their support and contributions to the implementation of the QF.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Choi said that since the launch of the QF in 2008, the Government had set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees, covering over half of the workforce in Hong Kong, to assist industries in implementing the QF. The Government also launched a series of support schemes under the QF Fund, such as subsidies to education and training providers in the accreditation exercises, reimbursement to practitioners to undertake the Recognition of Prior Learning assessments, and conduct of the QF-related studies and public education. At present, over 8 400 QF-recognised academic and vocational qualifications are listed in the Qualifications Register, which is available to the public free of charge. She expressed her heartfelt appreciation to the commended organisations. Without their support, the QF would not have been effectively implemented.

Today's ceremony also unveiled a new cohort of the QFIA. The QFIA aims to commend partners for supporting the QF and showcase the achievements made in their active application of the elements of the QF. The first cohort of the QFIA highlighted the exemplary practices of government departments and public organisations in applying the QF to enhance the quality of services and the professionalism of staff members. Dr Choi said that she looked forward to seeing more enterprises and organisations implement and promote the QF in the new cohort of the QFIA, thereby benefitting more industries and practitioners.

Enterprises commended today have made good use of the tools and supporting mechanisms of the QF in at least one of the following areas to enhance the quality of human resources: (a) developing Vocational Qualifications Pathway (VQP) courses or Specifications of Competency Standards (SCS)-based courses to enhance the synergy between learning and employment; (b) establishing Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) arrangements to provide more flexible learning opportunities; (c) encouraging employees to apply for Recognition of Prior Learning qualifications to have their experience and competences recognised under the QF; and (d) using QF-recognised qualifications in human resources development and management perspectives to enhance the competitiveness of the enterprises for their long-term development.

Education and training providers commended have developed VQP courses,

SCS-based courses, Specifications of Generic (Foundation) Competencies-based courses, or set up CAT arrangements to provide more flexible learning opportunities for learners. Trade associations, trade unions, and professional bodies that have actively promoted the QF also received commendations for supporting the wider implementation of the QF.



[External merchandise trade statistics for February 2021](#)

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (March 25) the external merchandise trade statistics for February 2021. In February 2021, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 30.4% and 17.6% respectively.

As the trade flows in January and February of each year tend to show considerable volatilities due to difference in timing of the Lunar New Year holidays, it is useful to analyse the trade figures for these two months taken together.

Taking January and February as a whole to neutralise the distortion caused by the difference in timing of the Lunar New Year holidays, the value of total exports of goods increased by 37.6% over the same period in 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 28.0%. A visible

trade deficit of \$40.0 billion, equivalent to 5.4% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first two months of 2021.

In February 2021, the value of total exports of goods increased by 30.4% over a year earlier to \$311.1 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 44.0% in January 2021. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 17.6% over a year earlier to \$325.8 billion in February 2021, after a year-on-year increase of 37.7% in January 2021. A visible trade deficit of \$14.7 billion, equivalent to 4.5% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in February 2021.

Comparing the three-month period ending February 2021 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 18.9%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 16.0%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing February 2021 with February 2020, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 28.6%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Korea (+51.9%), India (+41.2%), Japan (+34.2%), the Philippines (+33.8%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+31.9%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to Singapore (-7.1%) and Thailand (-6.1%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the USA (+34.6%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular the Mainland (+33.9%), Taiwan (+26.7%), Singapore (+22.7%), Vietnam (+22.2%) and Korea (+20.3%). Concurrently, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from the USA (-14.2%) and Japan (-8.3%).

For the first two months of 2021 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular the United Kingdom (+132.7%), the Netherlands (+54.4%), Taiwan (+48.0%), the Mainland (+45.8%) and Korea (+37.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+49.7%), Taiwan (+44.1%), the Mainland (+37.6%), Korea (+29.6%) and Singapore (+29.1%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing February 2021 with February 2020, 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 \$39.2 billion or 39.3%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$14.6 billion or 37.6%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$6.6

billion or 27.1%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$5.3 billion or 249.4%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$1.9 billion or -22.1%).

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 \$31.4 billion or 27.2%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$10.2 billion or 27.8%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$4.3 billion or 23.0%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$3.7 billion or 160.0%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$4.4 billion or -41.7%).

For the first two months of 2021 as a whole, year-on-year 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 \$96.2 billion or 46.1%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$34.8 billion or 39.9%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$18.6 billion or 36.1%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$11.2 billion or 288.6%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$0.2 billion or -1.8%).

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 \$85.4 billion or 36.5%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$29.0 billion or 34.9%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$13.6 billion or 33.9%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$8.8 billion or 28.3%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$7.8 billion or -37.4%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that taking the first two months of 2021 together to remove the distortion caused by the difference in timing of the Lunar New Year, the value of merchandise exports increased sharply by 37.6% over a year earlier, reflecting a further pick-up in growth momentum alongside the revival of global trading and production activities.

Looking ahead, the strong growth of the Mainland economy and improved economic situation in many advanced markets should render support to Hong Kong's exports of goods in the near term. Yet, the development of global epidemic, evolving China-US relations, and geopolitical tensions continue to warrant attention. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 at the annex presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for February 2021. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2018 to February 2021, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for February 2021 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 February 2021.

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 February 2021 will be released in mid-April 2021.

The February 2021 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in February 2021 and will be available in mid-April 2021. Users can download the publication 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).

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, March 25, 2021 is 101.9 (up 0.2 against yesterday's index).

Temporary suspension of public libraries computer system

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department today (March 25) announced that maintenance work for the Hong Kong Public Libraries computer system will be carried out from 00.30am to 11.59pm on April 2, during which the following services will be suspended:

- library mobile app services and Internet and telephone renewal services;
- other online library services, including the library catalogue, borrowers' record enquiries, reservation of library materials and Internet and Digital Service Workstations and electronic resources (e-Books and e-Databases); and
- self-service library stations (readers may still return books to the stations before the due date, and the loan record will be updated on the next working day).

Details can be obtained from the website at www.hkpl.gov.hk/en/library-notices/library-notices-list.html. For enquiries, please call 2921 0208.