

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (February 25), 13 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 10 474 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 677 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 224 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 211 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 24 public hospitals and a community treatment facility, among which 18 patients are in critical condition, 10 are in serious condition and the remaining 183 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	9867, 9917, 10561, 10679, 10759, 10772, 10798, 10803, 10818, 10820, 10828, 10854, 10892
Critical	1989, 3496, 6125, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9049, 9135, 9612, 9907, 9953, 10358, 10367, 10379, 10585, 10611, 10904
Serious	6386, 7076, 7468, 8221, 9055, 9550, 9733, 9793, 10023, 10083

External merchandise trade statistics for January 2021

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (February 25) the external merchandise trade statistics for January 2021. In January 2021, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 44.0% and 37.7% respectively.

In January 2021, the value of total exports of goods increased by 44.0% over a year earlier to \$388.0 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 11.7%

in December 2020. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 37.7% over a year earlier to \$413.2 billion in January 2021, after a year-on-year increase of 14.1% in December 2020. A visible trade deficit of \$25.2 billion, equivalent to 6.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in January 2021.

Comparing the three-month period ending January 2021 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 9.7%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 11.5%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing January 2021 with January 2020, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 49.5%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Taiwan (+73.2%), Vietnam (+60.5%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+58.8%) and Korea (+25.8%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to India (-7.0%).

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 (+18.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+83.3%), Taiwan (+61.8%), Chile (+54.6%), Thailand (+41.9%), the Mainland (+40.4%), Korea (+40.2%), Japan (+38.1%) and Singapore (+35.5%).

Comparing the three months ending January 2021 with the three months ending January 2020, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular the United Kingdom (+54.3%), Taiwan (+38.6%), Vietnam (+29.7%), the Mainland (+24.6%) and the Netherlands (+18.6%). However, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to India (-14.6%) and Singapore (-8.6%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Taiwan (+37.6%), Korea (+33.9%), Vietnam (+32.3%), Chile (+23.4%), Singapore (+21.2%) and the Mainland (+17.8%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing January 2021 with January 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 \$57.1 billion or 52.2%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$20.2 billion or 41.8%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$12.0 billion or 44.1%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$5.9 billion or 336.7%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "articles

of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$0.2 billion or -2.7%).

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 \$54.1 billion or 45.7%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$18.8 billion or 40.5%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$9.3 billion or 43.6%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$5.8 billion or 35.3%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$3.3 billion or -32.9%).

Comparing the three months ending January 2021 with the three months ending January 2020, 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 \$102.3 billion or 25.6%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$22.3 billion or 12.2%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$18.2 billion or 17.7%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$14.8 billion or 217.2%). However, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$4.4 billion or -17.5%) and "articles of apparel and clothing accessories" (by \$4.1 billion or -19.7%).

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 \$109.6 billion or 26.4%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$25.2 billion or 14.2%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$16.0 billion or 19.0%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$9.8 billion or 16.6%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$4.2 billion or -14.6%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports registered a substantial increase in January 2021 against the low base of comparison a year earlier. While this suggests that the stronger growth momentum that started in the latter part of last year has continued in January, the figure is partly distorted by the difference in timing of the Lunar New Year, which fell in mid-February this year but in late January last year. A clearer picture of the underlying situation can thus be ascertained by analysing the trade figures for January and February combined when available.

Looking ahead, the Mainland economy is expected to grow strongly, while import demand of the advanced markets should recover further if their

epidemic situation gradually stabilises. These developments will bode well for Hong Kong's exports of goods in the near term. Yet, the evolving China-US relations and geopolitical tensions continue to warrant attention. 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 January 2021. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2018 to January 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 January 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 January 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 January 2021 will be released in mid-March 2021.

The January 2021 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in January 2021 and will be available in mid-March 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).

[Eighteen persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations \(with photos\)](#)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" from February 22 to yesterday (February 24). A total of 15 suspected illegal workers and three suspected employers were arrested.

During the "Twilight" operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 31

target locations including car parks, a footbridge under maintenance, garbage collection depots, an industrial building, a laundry factory, massage parlours, premises under renovation, a residential building, restaurants and offices. Fifteen suspected illegal workers and three employers were arrested. The suspected illegal workers comprised 11 men and four women, aged 22 to 53. Among them, 11 men and a woman were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, a man was suspected of using and being in possession of a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Meanwhile, a man and two women, aged 44 to 57, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases. It is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they

are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.



[“FPS · Payments Made Easy” WhatsApp Stickers Design Competition results announced](#)

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

The results of the "FPS · Payments Made Easy" WhatsApp Stickers Design Competition jointly organised by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) were announced today (February 25).

The Competition aims to raise secondary school students' awareness of the Faster Payment System (FPS) as a financial infrastructure and as part of fintech development and electronic payments in Hong Kong. It encourages students to express their innovative, creative and interesting ideas through the popular WhatsApp stickers nowadays. As part of the programme, two webinars were organised in October 2020 for secondary school students to enhance their understanding about the FPS.

The response to the Competition was encouraging, with over 100 design entries received from 27 schools. The HKMA and the HKAB congratulate all the award winners of the Competition, the list of which was published today on

the [HKMA website](#). All the awarded designs have been made available for the public to download and use on various instant messaging apps. Interested users may download the stickers by following the instructions in the hyperlink above.

[Communications Authority press release](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Communications Authority:

This press release summarises the decisions of the Communications Authority (CA) following its 104th meeting held in February 2021:

CA publishes Spectrum Release Plan (SRP) for 2021 – 2023

In accordance with the Radio Spectrum Policy Framework promulgated by the Government in April 2007, the CA published today (February 25) the SRP for 2021 – 2023 to inform the industry of the potential supply of spectrum for provision of public mobile and/or other radiocommunications services in the coming three years.

According to the newly published SRP, in addition to the supply of 2 825 MHz of spectrum in the 600/700 MHz, 850 MHz, 2.5/2.6 GHz, 4.9 GHz and 26/28 GHz bands available for assignment/re-assignment, with relevant arrangements to be made this year, the CA has earmarked 4 000 MHz of new spectrum in the 41 GHz band for release to the market in the coming three years to enable the on-going development of public mobile services, including fifth generation mobile (5G) services.

The SRP for 2021 – 2023 is available on the CA's website:
www.coms-auth.hk/filemanager/en/content_613/spectrum_plan2021_en.pdf.

CA approves changes in shareholding structure of Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB)

The CA has approved an application by TVB, a domestic free television programme service (free TV) licensee, for changes in its shareholding structure arising from the transfer of 3.9 per cent of the voting shares of TVB controlled by the late Ms Mona Fong to a charitable trust with retrospective effect from August 27, 2020.

According to TVB, the shareholding changes would not bring about any material change to the legal and beneficial ownership of the licensee. Upon completion of the changes in the shareholding structure of TVB, which took effect on August 27, 2020, The Sir Run Run Shaw Charitable Trust has become the beneficiary of the 3.9 per cent of the voting shares of TVB. Young Lion

Holdings Limited, the major shareholder of TVB, continues to hold 22.1 per cent of the voting shares of TVB.

In approving the application, the CA is satisfied that TVB will continue to comply with all applicable regulatory requirements under the Broadcasting Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 562) and its free TV licence, and that it will be able to honour the investment and programming commitments it has made under its licence after completion of the shareholding changes.

Breach of residence requirement by TTV Asia Limited (TTV)

The CA decided that TTV, a holder of an other licensable television programme service licence, had breached section 8(4)(b) of the BO (Cap. 562) by failing to have at least one director or principal officer since September 11, 2020, who was at that time ordinarily a resident in Hong Kong and had been a resident for at least one continuous period of seven years. Taking into account the circumstances of the case and severity of the breach, the CA decided that a financial penalty of \$50,000 should be imposed on TTV.

Renewal of non-domestic television programme service licence of APT Satellite TV Development Limited (APT)

The CA approved the application by APT for renewal of its non-domestic television programme service (non-domestic TV) licence for 12 years, from February 27, 2022, to February 26, 2034 (both dates inclusive). Currently, there are 10 non-domestic TV licensees providing over 190 satellite television programme channels for the Asia Pacific region.