

Volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade in November 2020

Further to the external merchandise trade statistics in value terms for November 2020 released earlier on, the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (January 18) the volume and price statistics of external merchandise trade for that month.

In November 2020, the volume of Hong Kong's total exports of goods and imports of goods increased by 6.2% and 5.2% respectively over November 2019.

Comparing the first eleven months of 2020 with the same period in 2019, the volume of Hong Kong's total exports of goods and imports of goods decreased by 2.0% and 4.1% respectively.

Comparing the three-month period ending November 2020 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the volume of total exports of goods and imports of goods increased by 8.3% and 6.7% respectively.

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

Comparing November 2020 with November 2019, the prices of total exports of goods and imports of goods both decreased by 0.2%.

As regards price changes in the first eleven months of 2020 over the same period in 2019, the prices of total exports of goods and imports of goods decreased by 0.7% and 0.8% 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 2019, the index remained virtually unchanged in November 2020, whereas it increased by 0.1% in the first eleven months of 2020.

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

Comparing November 2020 with November 2019, a double-digit increase of 16.7% was recorded for the total export volume to Taiwan. Concurrently, the total export volume to the mainland of China (the Mainland) (8.6%), Japan (2.5%) and the USA (2.4%) also increased. On the other hand, the total export

volume to India decreased by 14.7%.

Over the same period of comparison, the total export prices to Japan (-0.1%), the USA (-0.1%) and the Mainland (-0.1%) decreased. On the other hand, the total export prices to India (0.8%) and Taiwan (3.4%) increased.

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

Comparing November 2020 with November 2019, double-digit increases were recorded for the import volume from Korea (18.2%) and Taiwan (17.6%). Concurrently, the import volume from the Mainland (5.9%) and Singapore (5.2%) also increased. On the other hand, the import volume from Japan decreased by 0.4%.

Over the same period of comparison, the import prices from the Mainland decreased by 1.5%. On the other hand, the import prices from Korea (0.2%), Japan (0.8%), Taiwan (1.0%) and Singapore (1.8%) increased.

Further information

Details of the above statistics are published in the November 2020 issue of "Hong Kong Merchandise Trade Index Numbers". Users can download the publication 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).

SWD invites applications for Enrolled Nurse Training Programme for welfare sector 2021-22

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) invites applications, starting from January 25, for admission to a two-year full-time Enrolled Nurse (General) Training Programme for the welfare sector which will provide 200 places.

A spokesman for the SWD said that to alleviate the shortage of enrolled nurses in the welfare sector and enhance the quality of care services, the SWD has since 2006 organised Enrolled Nurse Training Programmes and has continued to commission the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) to provide the training programmes for four consecutive years from 2021/22.

The training programme, which aims to equip graduates to become

competent and caring professional nurses, is to be provided through the Higher Diploma in Nursing Studies (General Health Care) (Programme code: HDNGOSF1) organised by the OUHK. The training programme, to commence on September 20, will be conducted on the campus of the OUHK in Ho Man Tin, and the OUHK will also be responsible for the arrangement of relevant clinical practices.

On the qualifications required, the spokesman said, "Applicants must have attained the age of 18 by the time the training programme commences and have attained Level 2 or above in five subjects, including Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and any two other subjects in Categories A and B in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination; or have completed a Pre-Associate Degree programme, or an equivalent qualification."

The spokesman added, "To encourage youths and front-line staff currently serving the welfare sector to upgrade their skills, priority will be accorded to applicants who have successfully completed the two-year Diploma Programme and obtained the diploma under the Navigation Scheme for Young Persons in Care Services launched in 2015 (or under the First-hire-then-train Pilot Scheme from 2013 to 2016) by the SWD; or those who are currently working full-time in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or private organisations providing elderly, rehabilitation, family and child care, youth or correctional services. Individuals who aspire to start a career as enrolled nurses in the welfare sector are also welcome."

Tuition fees will be reimbursed to the trainees in full on condition that the trainees have successfully completed the training programme and qualified to register as an enrolled nurse within two years. Trainees will also be required to sign an undertaking to indicate their readiness to be employed as an Enrolled Nurse (General) providing elderly, rehabilitation, family and child care, or correctional services operated by NGOs or private organisations for a continuous period of no less than two years after satisfactory completion of the training. If in breach of this term, trainees will have to repay the SWD the tuition fees.

An information seminar on the training programme will be held through Zoom at 4pm on February 5 (Friday). Registration for the seminar is welcome before February 3. Registration of the seminar and information about the training programme are available on the webpage of the OUHK (www.ouhk.edu.hk/wcsprd/Satellite?pagename=OUHK/tcSchool2014&lang=eng&sch=NUR). Applicants must submit their applications for the training programme via the Online Admission Application System of the OUHK (www.ouhk.edu.hk/FTUG_application). Hyperlinks are also provided on the SWD webpage (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_whatsnew). Applications will close on March 12. For enquiries, please contact the OUHK at 3970 2958 or 3970 2955.

HA endorses Corporate Plan and Budget for 2021-22

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

At the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) meeting today (January 18), the HA endorsed the Corporate Plan for 2021-22, the 2020-21 Revised Budget and the 2021-22 Proposed Budget, and also noted the Financial Forecasts for 2022-23 to 2024-25.

In 2021-22, the HA will continue to focus its efforts on providing quality homes, promoting sustainable living, optimising and rationalising the use of public resources and enhancing the attractiveness of its commercial properties. Based on these four themes, a total of 50 key activities and 19 key performance indicators have been drawn up for the 2021-22 Corporate Plan.

"The Corporate Plan is the platform through which the HA directs its work and focuses its efforts to address the challenges of public housing. In 2021-22, the HA will continue to invite the Government to provide suitable sites for developing both public rental housing (PRH) units and subsidised sale flats with a view to increasing the supply of public housing units. We will continue to put up Home Ownership Scheme and Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme flats for sale, accelerate the sale of unsold flats in the 39 estates under Tenants Purchase Scheme and explore the feasibility of redeveloping the HA's factory estates for public housing use. Furthermore, as announced in the 2020 Policy Address, we will clear the Shek Lei Interim Housing by the end of 2022 to redevelop the site for public housing development," a spokesman for the HA said.

"On development and construction of public housing, the HA will continue to review and enhance the quality management system and specifications for all critical site works and installations for new capital works projects and explore possible enhancements to the buildability and productivity of public housing developments, so as to expedite the development process and optimise the development potential of each and every public housing site where practicable. On estate management, the HA will continue to enhance safety, environmental hygiene, greening and landscaping, as well as community bonding in PRH estates. On corporate management, the HA will continue to make the best use of human resources to meet the corporate goals and enhance its corporate image," the spokesman added.

During the budget and forecast period from 2020-21 to 2024-25, with the projected increase in construction expenditure and operating expenditure partly offset by the subsidised sale flat receipts and recurrent receipts, the cash and investment balance of the HA is projected to decrease from about \$55.9 billion at the beginning of April 2020 to about \$49.9 billion by the end of March 2025. It is also projected that the HA will have the necessary financial resources to meet its recurrent expenditure and implement its

current public housing construction programme and maintenance programme during the budget and forecast period.

"If and when there are changes to any of the budget assumptions, the projected financial position will vary. It is worth noting that in the five-year budgets and forecasts up to 2024-25, it only reflects the completion of the planned production of around 100 000 flats from 2020-21 to 2024-25. For production of the estimated public housing supply of 316 000 flats for the 10 years from 2021-22 to 2030-31, the estimated construction expenditure will increase significantly in the second five years of the 10-year period (for construction of about 200 000 flats) in line with the production to meet the housing supply target for the 10 years from 2021-22 to 2030-31. According to the established mechanism, the HA will conduct an annual rolling five-year budgeting exercise and assess its financial position and future funding requirements. The Government has earmarked \$82.4 billion (the balance of the previous Housing Reserve as at December 31, 2018) in the fiscal reserves for the development of public housing and related infrastructure, which demonstrates the Government's commitment in this regard," the spokesman said.

The HA's 2021-22 Corporate Plan and the Budgets will be submitted to the Chief Executive for approval. The Financial Forecasts will also be made available to the Chief Executive for her information.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, January 18, 2021 is 100.9 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, January 16, 2021 was 100.9 (up 0.2 against last Friday's index).

DH's Tsuen Wan Government Offices Dental Clinic staff member preliminarily tests positive for COVID-19

The Department of Health announced today (January 18) that a staff member of its Tsuen Wan Government Offices Dental Clinic has preliminarily

tested positive for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In consideration of public health and hygiene, the clinic was closed immediately for thorough cleaning and disinfection. Affected clients will be contacted to reschedule their service appointments.

The staff member concerned is a clerical-grade staff. She last performed duties on January 14. Her body temperature was normal when undergoing temperature screening during work and she remained asymptomatic all along. She wore a surgical mask while performing duties and properly maintained social distancing with people she contacted. Her residential building was included in the compulsory testing notice on January 14. She underwent a COVID-19 test on January 15 and the test result was negative, but her household contact was confirmed with COVID-19 infection on January 16. She developed symptoms on January 17 evening and was sent to hospital for testing. The preliminary test result today was positive.

The DH's Centre for Health Protection has initiated an epidemiological investigation on the above case. Relevant contact tracing is ongoing to identify and trace close contacts of the staff member. The DH is highly concerned about the COVID-19 situation and has been strictly implementing various disease prevention measures during the epidemic, which include providing employees with masks and other protective equipment, stepping up the cleaning and sanitising measures of the working environment, and reminding all staff to maintain personal hygiene and be vigilant at all times.