

## May 2020 issue of “Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics” now available

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (May 18) the May 2020 issue of the "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" (HKMDS).

Apart from providing up-to-date statistics, this issue also contains two feature articles entitled "Container Statistics, 2014 to 2019" and "Currency Composition of Hong Kong's International Investment Position".

"Container Statistics, 2014 to 2019"

Although the container throughput decreased from 22.23 million TEUs in 2014 to 18.30 million TEUs in 2019, the port of Hong Kong was still one of the busiest ports in the world. Laden container movements between Hong Kong and the mainland of China accounted for 40.6% of the laden container throughput of the port of Hong Kong in 2019. About 75.2% of the laden container movements between Hong Kong and the Mainland were in the Pearl River Delta region.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Outward Processing and Shipping Statistics Section, C&SD (Tel: 2582 4889; email: [shipping@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:shipping@censtatd.gov.hk)).

"Currency Composition of Hong Kong's International Investment Position"

International Investment Position (IIP) is an important statistic in the system of macroeconomic accounts that summarises the external position of an economy with the rest of the world. It is a balance sheet showing an economy's stock of external financial assets and liabilities at a particular time point. The difference between the external financial assets and liabilities is the net IIP of an economy, which represents either its net claim on or net liability to the rest of the world.

The global financial crisis in 2008 underscored the importance of balance sheet data for assessing an economy's external vulnerability. The international community, such as meetings of the G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, has been advocating the compilation of currency composition of IIP in recent years.

The C&SD will compile and disseminate the currency composition of IIP regularly. This article briefly introduces the data source for compiling the statistics in Hong Kong and the use of the statistics in assessing the external position. It also presents the salient features of the currency composition of Hong Kong's IIP during the period from 2017 to 2019.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Balance of Payments Branch (1), C&SD (Tel: 3903 6990; email: [bop@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:bop@censtatd.gov.hk)).

Published in bilingual form, the HKMDS is a compact volume of official

statistics containing about 140 tables. It collects up-to-date statistical series on various aspects of the social and economic situation of Hong Kong. Topics include population; labour; external trade; National Income and Balance of Payments; prices; business performance; energy; housing and property; government accounts, finance and insurance; and transport, communications and tourism. For selected key statistical items, over 20 charts depicting the annual trend in the past decade and quarterly or monthly trend in the recent two years are also available. Users can download the Digest free of charge at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp460.jsp?productCode=B1010002](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp460.jsp?productCode=B1010002)).

Enquiries about the contents of the Digest can be directed to the Statistical Information Dissemination Section (1) of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4738; email: [gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk)).

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## **CHP announces no new local confirmed cases of COVID-19 today**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health has announced that as of 4pm today (May 18), no new local confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had been recorded, and that the number of cases in Hong Kong remained at 1 056 so far (comprising 1 055 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The CHP again urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives to minimise the risk of infection. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are

advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP has set up hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 3pm today, a total of 115 674 calls had been received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" ([www.coronavirus.gov.hk](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk)) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
  - Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
  - Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
  - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
  - After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
  - Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
  - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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# Government announces mechanism for registered practice units of HKICPA to apply for exemption from compulsory quarantine arrangement

The Government announced today (May 18) that certified public accountants (practising), partners, directors or employees of registered practice units of the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA) who are required to travel to the Mainland to conduct audit work for companies listed in Hong Kong with Mainland operations may apply for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement.

The Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong (Amendment) (No.2) Regulation 2020 commenced on April 29, 2020, amending the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) (the amended Regulation). The expiry date of the amended Regulation has been extended to June 7, 2020. In accordance with the newly added section 4(1)(b) in the amended Regulation, the Chief Secretary for Administration may designate any person or category of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement if he is satisfied that the person's or persons' travelling is necessary for purposes relating to the provision of professional services in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development.

In accordance with the above-mentioned provision, the Chief Secretary for Administration has designated the following category of persons for exemption from the compulsory quarantine arrangement:

Certified public accountants (practising), partners, directors or employees of practice units registered with the HKICPA under the Professional Accountants Ordinance (Cap. 50), who are required to travel to the Mainland to conduct audit work for companies listed on a recognised stock market (as defined by section 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Securities and Futures Ordinance (Cap. 571)) and having Mainland operations, to assist those companies to fulfil their obligations under relevant Ordinances or other regulatory instruments that govern the operation of the companies or their business.

An exempted person must only travel to and stay in the Mainland area/city where the professional services of auditing are provided for the purpose of provision of the intended professional services of auditing as approved, and must take every precautionary measure to ensure personal hygiene and avoid unnecessary social contact whilst in the Mainland. After returning to Hong Kong, the exempted person will be subject to medical surveillance arranged by the Department of Health for a period of 14 days. The person will be required to wear masks and check body temperature daily,

and report to the Department of Health on any discomfort.

The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (FSTB) will consider and approve applications with the administrative support of the HKICPA. The HKICPA will notify eligible registered practice units of the exemption mechanism, the requisite information to support application and the details of the application procedures, and provide them with the application forms. The maximum number of persons for which an eligible registered practice unit may apply for exemption should not exceed two times the number of Hong Kong-listed company clients with Mainland operation requiring its audit work. To apply for an authorisation for exemption, an application form should be completed by the applicant(s) and the respective practice unit. Each application is for a specific audit task and should cover not more than two persons. Information, including the period and the location for which the audit task is conducted, should be provided in the application.

In accordance with the operating procedures prescribed by the FSTB, the HKICPA will be responsible for processing and vetting the applications, verifying the relevant data and setting out recommendations for the FSTB's consideration. After considering the recommendations of the HKICPA and approving the applications, the FSTB will issue authorisation letters to the exempted persons with the conditions for exemption.

All exempted persons should note that currently travellers to the Mainland would still be subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement imposed by the Mainland authorities. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region is discussing with authorities in the Mainland on mutual recognition of COVID-19 testing results conducted by recognised medical laboratories, with a view to exempting the quarantine requirement for Hong Kong travellers to the Mainland. Details of the arrangement will be announced when available.

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## **HAD's statement on complaints against Tuen Mun District Council member Mr Cheung Ho-sum**

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) recently received a number of complaints against Tuen Mun District Council (DC) member Mr Cheung Ho-sum for displaying a notice instigating participation in special training and action involving "revolution" at his ward office.

A spokesman for the HAD said today (May 18), "The notice displayed at the ward office of Mr Cheung involves a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members of a District Council or Its Committees. The HAD issued a letter to

the DC member concerned, strongly advising him to remove the notice promptly in order to avoid social disturbance and damage to community harmony."

The HAD also reminded the DC member of the guiding principles and the relevant requirements in the Guidelines on the Remuneration Package for Members of the District Councils of the HKSAR (Remuneration Guidelines), i.e. a DC member should use public funds in an open, fair and accountable manner, and for discharging DC duties. The display of the notice at the ward office of the DC member is not consistent with the guiding principles and the relevant requirements of the Remuneration Guidelines.

Furthermore, the HAD referred the complaints to the Chairman of the Tuen Mun DC so that she can follow up. The HAD hopes that the Tuen Mun DC would handle the case impartially, and ensure that DC members would refrain from acts that may compromise or impair their integrity, impartiality, objectivity or ability to perform duties and thereby bring the DC into disrepute.

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## **Effective Exchange Rate Index**

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, May 18, 2020 is 109.1(same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, May 16, 2020 was 109.1 (up 0.2 against last Friday's index).