

Postal services to Uruguay return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (January 28) that, as advised by the postal administration of Uruguay, postal services to Uruguay have returned to normal.

Provision of alternative electronic payment system in Hong Kong Island Green Minibus Route Nos. 8 and 8X starts

The Transport Department (TD) today (January 28) announced that the electronic payment "Easy Go" System has been put into service in Hong Kong Island Green Minibus (GMB) Route Nos. 8 and 8X (Baguio Villas (Lower) – Central (Exchange Square)) for a trial of operation starting today.

A spokesman for the TD said, "With the advent of new technologies, different electronic payment systems have become increasingly common and diversified in Hong Kong. In connection with the Government's policy initiative of smart city development, we welcome the introduction of new technology in the GMB sector to facilitate fare collection, and provide passengers with an alternative electronic means of fare payment."

The GMB operator has displayed passenger notices at the GMB terminus and inside compartments in order to inform passengers of the service arrangement.

The spokesman added, "The TD will ensure that the new electronic payment system to be introduced by GMB operators for fare collection purposes should be reliable, user-friendly and efficient, in order to avoid causing disruption to the operation of the GMB services or the road traffic conditions, and to protect the interests of passengers and road users."

The TD will closely monitor the operation of the electronic payment system. The TD will further liaise with the GMB operators on the feasibility to extend the electronic payment system to other GMB routes if the trial is proven to be feasible and desirable after review.

Passengers can call the operator's hotline at 2873 6808 should they have any enquires on the electronic payment system.

External Merchandise Trade Statistics for December 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (January 28) the external merchandise trade statistics for December 2018. In December 2018, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 5.8% and 7.0% respectively.

In December 2018, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 5.8% over a year earlier to \$339.9 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 0.8% in November 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 7.0% over a year earlier to \$391.2 billion in December 2018, after a year-on-year increase of 0.5% in November 2018. A visible trade deficit of \$51.2 billion, equivalent to 13.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in December 2018.

For 2018 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods rose by 7.3% over 2017. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 8.4%. A visible trade deficit of \$563.3 billion, equivalent to 11.9% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in 2018.

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2018 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 3.2%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 5.1%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing December 2018 with December 2017, total exports to Asia as a whole dropped by 7.8%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (-35.9%), Vietnam (-15.7%), the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-8.7%), Korea (-4.5%) and Japan (-3.6%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Singapore (+29.9%) and Thailand (+9.9%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular Germany (-10.9%), the United Kingdom (-3.6%) and the USA (-0.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Taiwan (-29.6%), Korea (-25.4%), India (-24.3%), the Philippines (-19.2%), Japan (-12.7%), Thailand (-8.0%) and the Mainland (-4.2%). Concurrently, an increase was recorded in the value of imports from Malaysia (+14.3%).

For 2018 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Singapore (+13.3%), Thailand (+11.9%), the Netherlands (+11.5%), the Mainland (+8.6%),

the USA (+8.1%) and Vietnam (+4.5%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports to India (-15.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+64.6%), Korea (+10.4%), Singapore (+9.0%), the USA (+8.1%), the Mainland (+7.7%) and Thailand (+2.8%). On the other hand, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports from India (-14.0%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing December 2018 with December 2017, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$8.7 billion or -41.0%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$7.3 billion or -5.7%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$2.2 billion or -5.3%). However, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$2.0 billion or 48.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$20.2 billion or -13.0%), "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$8.2 billion or -11.3%) and "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$2.2 billion or -13.0%). However, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$3.2 billion or 9.0%).

For 2018 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$198.0 billion or 14.3%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$44.2 billion or 10.9%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$28.1 billion or 13.6%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$28.3 billion or -14.0%).

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 \$179.7 billion or 11.4%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$68.6 billion or 19.4%) and "petroleum, petroleum products and related materials" (by \$24.4 billion or 33.0%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman noted that the value of merchandise exports showed an enlarged year-on-year decline in December 2018, as the moderation in global economic growth and the US-Mainland trade tensions increasingly weighed on the exports of many Asian economies. Nonetheless, thanks to the

strong performance in the earlier part of the year, the value of merchandise exports rose notably by 7.3% for 2018 as a whole.

The near-term outlook for merchandise trade is challenging amid moderating global economic growth and the uncertainty surrounding the US-Mainland trade relations. 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 December 2018. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2015 to December 2018, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for December 2018 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 December 2018.

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 December 2018 will be released in mid-February 2019.

The December 2018 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in December 2018 and will be available in mid-February 2019. Users can download the publication free of charge 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).

First licence application granted by Private Columbaria Licensing Board

The Private Columbaria Licensing Board earlier held an open meeting to consider a licence application submitted under the Private Columbaria Ordinance. The relevant procedures have been completed. The Licensing Board informed the applicant concerned in writing today (January 28) that its application had been granted.

The relevant licence will be issued on the same day the applicant concerned duly pays the prescribed licence fee in accordance with Schedule 6 of the Ordinance. The validity period of the licence takes effect from the date of issue of the licence. Upon the issue of the licence, information relating to the licence, including the name and address of the columbarium, restriction on sale of niche interment right (if any), approved plans and licence conditions, will be included in the Register of Private Columbaria to be kept by the Licensing Board in accordance with the Ordinance. The Register will be uploaded to the dedicated website on the regulation of private columbaria (www.rpc.gov.hk) after the issue of the licence mentioned above.

The Licensing Board will continue to process applications for specified instruments (i.e. licence, exemption or temporary suspension of liability under the Ordinance) submitted by some 140 private columbaria. Each applicant for a specified instrument should prove that the private columbarium concerned complies with all the applicable requirements stipulated under the Ordinance and the requirements specified by the Licensing Board. In respect of applications for a licence, the applicant has to submit all the necessary documents and information to prove that the columbarium complies with requirements, including those relating to land, planning, buildings, fire safety, management plan and right to use the premises.

Each application for a specified instrument will be considered by the Licensing Board at its open meetings in due course. The Licensing Board will give regard to the public interest and other relevant considerations when determining an application.

Members of the public may visit the dedicated website mentioned above for information on the latest position of processing of individual applications for specified instruments, agendas of open meetings, decisions of the Licensing Board and the updated Register of Private Columbaria.

As the Ordinance has come into effect, a private columbarium must obtain a licence before it may sell or newly let out niches. To protect their interest, members of the public should buy directly from a licence holder and ensure that all the amounts required to be paid have been clearly stated in the sale agreement.

Special traffic arrangements for Victoria Park Lunar New Year Fair

Police will implement special traffic arrangements in Causeway Bay and Tin Hau to facilitate members of the public visiting Victoria Park Lunar New Year Fair.

A. Pedestrianisation

The following roads will be pedestrianised daily from 4pm to 11.59pm from January 30 to February 1, from 12 noon to 3am the following day on February 2 and 3, and from 4pm on February 4 to 8am the following day:

- Lockhart Road east of Cannon Street;
- East Point Road; and
- Great George Street west of Paterson Street.

B. Road closure

The following roads may be closed daily from 10am to 23.59pm from January 30 to February 1, and daily from 10am to 3am the following day on February 2 and 3:

- The access road of Electric Road to the car park of Park Towers between Yacht Street and Hing Fat Street, except for vehicles heading to Park Towers car park;
- Hing Fat Street between Causeway Road and Lau Li Street, except for franchised buses and green minibuses (GMBs);
- The lay-by on Hing Fat Street near Lau Li Street;
- Lau Li Street between Hing Fat Street and Ngan Mok Street (parking meters and disable parking spaces will not be affected); and
- If necessary, half lane of Electric Road between Gordon Road and Yacht Street will be closed to extend the pedestrian area.

The following roads may be closed daily from 4pm to 23.59pm from January 30 to February 1, and daily from 4pm to 3am the following day on February 2 and 3:

- Sugar Street;
- Northbound Gloucester Road between Causeway Road and Great George Street;
- Great George Street;
- Paterson Street;
- Cleveland Street;
- Northbound Gloucester Road between Great George Street and Tai Hang Road flyover (Northbound Tai Hang Flyover towards Central will remain open);
- Kingston Street; and
- Southbound Gloucester Road between Causeway Road and Causeway Bay flyover.

The following roads may be closed daily from 4pm to 3am the following day on February 2 and 3:

- Lockhart Road east of Percival Street;
- Jaffe Road east of Percival Street; and
- Cannon Street.

The following roads will be closed on February 4 by stages:

Stage 1 (from 10am or when necessary)

- Electric Road between Lau Li Street and Hing Fat Street, except for

vehicles heading to Park Towers car park;

- Hing Fat Street between Causeway Road and Lau Li Street, except for franchised buses and GMBs;
- The lay-by on Hing Fat Street near Lau Li Street;
- Lau Li Street between Hing Fat Street and Ngan Mok Street;
- If necessary, half lane of Electric Road between Gordon Road and Yacht Street will be closed to extend the pedestrian area.

Stage 2 $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}$ from 4pm or when necessary $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}\%$

- Sugar Street; and
- Northbound Gloucester Road between Causeway Road and Great George Street.

Stage 3A $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}$ from 5pm or when necessary $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}\%$

- Cleveland Street;
- Kingston Street;
- Paterson Street;
- Great George Street between Paterson Street and Gloucester Road; and
- Jardine's Bazaar.

Stage 3B $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}$ from 7pm or when necessary, except for franchised buses, GMBs and trams $\hat{i}^{\frac{1}{4}}\%$

- Eastbound Hennessy Road between Percival Street and East Point Road;
- Eastbound Yee Wo Street;
- The leftmost lane of Pennington Street between Irving Street and Yee Wo Street;
- Eastbound Causeway Road between King's Road and Moreton Terrace;
- Westbound Hennessy Road between Jardine's Bazaar and Percival Street; and
- Irving Street.

Stage 4A (from 8pm or when necessary)

- Lockhart Road east of Percival Street;
- Jaffe Road east of Percival Street;
- Cannon Street; and
- Shelter Street.

Stage 4B (from 9pm or when necessary)

- Southbound Gloucester Road between Causeway Road and the down ramp of Causeway Bay flyover;
- Tai Hang Road flyover;
- Northbound Causeway Bay flyover;
- If necessary, the leftmost lane of Causeway Road between Tung Lo Wan Road (eastern section) and Tung Lo Wan Road (western section); and
- If necessary, Hing Fat Street between Causeway Road and Lau Li Street, except for franchised buses and GMBs.

C. Traffic diversions

Lau Li Street between Electric Road and Hing Fat Street will be re-

routed one-way westbound with no access for public light buses from 5pm or when necessary on February 4.

The following traffic diversions will be implemented from 9pm on February 4 or when necessary:

- Vehicles heading for southbound Tai Hang Road flyover will be diverted to eastbound Victoria Park Road, Wing Hing Street and King's Road; and
- Vehicles heading for northbound Tai Hang Road flyover will be diverted to Tung Lo Wan Road, Moreton Terrace and Leighton Road for Central and Western District direction.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

All car parks and vehicular accesses within the closed roads will be suspended until further notice:

All parking spaces in Hing Fat Street Car Park will be suspended from 10am on February 2 to 10am on February 5, except for disabled parking spaces.

All on-street public parking spaces at the following locations will be suspended from 2pm on February 4 to 8am the following day:

- The closed roads mentioned above;
- Tung Lo Wan Road;
- Lockhart Road between Canal Road East and Cannon Street;
- Jaffe Road between Canal Road East and Cannon Street;
- Tsing Fung Street; and
- Lau Li Street.

E. Prohibition to learner drivers

Learner drivers cannot use the following roads from 4pm on February 4 to 8am the following day:

- Leighton Road;
- Tin Lok Lane;
- Caroline Hill Road;
- Eastern Hospital Road;
- Tai Hang Road north of Lai Tak Tsuen Road;
- Tung Lo Wan Road;
- Electric Road south of Gordon Road;
- Morrison Hill Road north of Queen's Road East;
- Hennessy Road;
- Yee Wo Street;
- Causeway Road;
- King's Road;
- Gloucester Road service road;
- Hing Fat Street;
- Westbound Tin Hau Temple Road west of Cloud View Road; and
- Eastbound Wan Chai Road.

Members of the public are advised to make use of public transport to go

to the Fair.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of special traffic arrangements may be towed away without prior warning or subjected to multiple ticketing.

Actual implementation of the traffic arrangements will be made depending on traffic and crowd conditions in the areas. Motorists are advised to drive with care and patience and follow the instructions of the Police on site.