

CHP follows up on cluster of Candida auris carrier cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (August 1) following up on a cluster of *Candida auris* carrier cases involving a total of three residents from a residential care home for the elderly (RCHE) in Sham Shui Po, and reminded members of the public about the proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene against infection.

The CHP received notification from the Hospital Authority on July 6 and 18 that two residents of that RCHE, involving an 82-year-old male and a 61-year-old female, who were admitted to Caritas Medical Centre earlier, were confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon testing. The duo with underlying illnesses, have no symptoms of infection. One of them has been discharged.

Upon receiving the notification, the CHP conducted a follow-up epidemiological investigation of the RCHE. It was found that a 79-year-old female, who was admitted to Wong Tai Sin Hospital in April this year, was earlier confirmed to have carried *Candida auris* upon testing. She was discharged in May and has resided in the RCHE since then. She is in stable condition. The CHP also conducted contact tracing and screening, and the test results yesterday (July 31) revealed that no additional carrier case has been identified. The CHP is now investigating the infection source of the cluster. The possibility of transmission in the RCHE is not ruled out.

The CHP has provided infection control advice and staff training to staff of the RCHE. The RCHE is advised to follow the prevailing guidelines to enhance infection control measures including specific placement of carrier residents, strict observation of infection control precautions, enhancement of environmental cleansing and disinfection, use of dedicated medical equipment, toilet and bathing facilities to prevent the spread of *Candida auris*. The CHP will keep in close liaison with the RCHE concerned and monitor the situation of the residents, and ensure the RCHE has carried out the various infection control measures.

A spokesman for the CHP explained that *Candida* is a fungus commonly found in the natural environment, particularly in moist and warm environments. In humans, it is commonly found in body sites such as the oral cavity, the digestive tract, skin and the vagina. It is a common fungus living on or in the human body but can occasionally cause infections, especially in individuals with impaired immunity.

Among the different *Candida* species, *Candida auris* is more drug-resistant. Infections vary from being mild to potentially life-threatening or fatal, depending on which part of the body is affected and the general health condition of the patient. The spokesman stressed that proper use of antimicrobials and maintaining personal hygiene, especially hand hygiene, are crucial to the prevention of emergence and cross-transmission of *Candida*

auris.

Inland Revenue Department alerts public to fraudulent emails

The Inland Revenue Department today (August 1) alerted members of the public to fraudulent emails purportedly issued by the department, which invite recipients to claim tax refunds. Each email provides a hyperlink to a website which seeks to obtain the recipient's personal particulars and credit card information.

The department has no connection with the fraudulent emails and has reported the case to the Police for further investigation. Members of the public are reminded not to open any suspicious emails.

SCST meets with Director of Hangzhou Sports Bureau (with photos)

The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, continued his visit in Hangzhou. He met with the Director of the Hangzhou Sports Bureau, Mr Jin Chenglong, today (August 1) to exchange views on sports development on both sides and explore opportunities for co-operation. Mr Yeung also took the opportunity to visit the Hangzhou Chen Jinglun Sports School under the Bureau. Mr Yeung then met with the 19th Asian Games Hangzhou 2022 Organising Committee in the afternoon for exchanges and visited the Hangzhou Asian Games Village to learn about the opportunities and challenges of hosting the Asian Games and the Asian Para Games, and ways to promote sports for all through the Games.

Mr Yeung said, "The 19th Asian Games is the third time our country is hosting this Asian mega sports event. Our visit and exchanges will help Hong Kong to co-host the 15th National Games in 2025, making good use of the Kai Tak Sports Park which will be completed soon to further promote sports development. The Hong Kong, China Delegation will send more than 680 athletes, the biggest scale ever, to compete in this Asian Games. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government gives full support to our athletes to strive for excellence and bring glory to our country and Hong Kong. In addition to the Hong Kong Sports Institute's support to athletes competing in elite sports events, the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau has

also approved from the Arts and Sport Development Fund (Sports Portion) a grant of \$74 million in preparation funding to support other athletes and their teams preparing for the Games. I wish the Asian Games and Asia Para Games in Hangzhou a great success."

Together with the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services, Mr Vincent Liu, Mr Yeung also visited the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre, which is the main venue of the Asian Games and one of the biggest sports centres in the country. Mr Yeung also visited the Huanglong Sports Centre to learn about its smart system in venue management and its operation.

Members of the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs, Culture and Sports also joined the meeting and visited the two venues. Mr Yeung shared with Panel members the progress of the preparation efforts of the Hong Kong, China Delegation and the HKSAR Government's support for athletes who compete in the Asian Games.





Provisional statistics of retail sales for June 2023

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released the latest figures on retail sales today (August 1).

The value of total retail sales in June 2023, provisionally estimated at \$33.1 billion, increased by 19.6% compared with the same month in 2022. The revised estimate of the value of total retail sales in May 2023 increased by 18.5% compared with a year earlier. For the first half of 2023, it was provisionally estimated that the value of total retail sales increased by 20.7% compared with the same period in 2022.

Of the total retail sales value in June 2023, online sales accounted for 6.7%. The value of online retail sales in that month, provisionally estimated at \$2.2 billion, decreased by 3.3% compared with the same month in 2022. The revised estimate of online retail sales in May 2023 decreased by 3.7% compared with a year earlier. For the first half of 2023, it was provisionally estimated that the value of online retail sales decreased by 6.2% compared with the same period in 2022.

After netting out the effect of price changes over the same period, the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales in June 2023 increased by 17.5% compared with a year earlier. The revised estimate of the volume of total retail sales in May 2023 increased by 16.6% compared with a year earlier. For the first half of 2023, the provisional estimate of the total retail sales increased by 18.9% in volume compared with the same period in 2022.

Analysed by broad type of retail outlet in descending order of the provisional estimate of the value of sales and comparing June 2023 with June 2022, the value of sales of jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts

increased by 64.3%. This was followed by sales of other consumer goods not elsewhere classified (+20.5% in value); wearing apparel (+34.2%); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+6.6%); commodities in department stores (+4.2%); medicines and cosmetics (+49.4%); electrical goods and other consumer durable goods not elsewhere classified (+11.3%); motor vehicles and parts (+24.9%); footwear, allied products and other clothing accessories (+26.1%); Chinese drugs and herbs (+17.1%); books, newspapers, stationery and gifts (+19.3%); and optical shops (+29.9%).

On the other hand, the value of sales of commodities in supermarkets decreased by 3.5% in June 2023 over a year earlier. This was followed by sales of fuels (-19.1% in value); and furniture and fixtures (-6.4%).

Based on the seasonally adjusted series, the provisional estimate of the value of total retail sales increased by 5.3% in the second quarter of 2023 compared with the preceding quarter, while the provisional estimate of the volume of total retail sales increased by 4.2%.

Commentary

A government spokesman said that the value of total retail sales continued to rise notably in June over a year earlier thanks to the recovery of inbound tourism and positive consumption sentiment.

The spokesman added that the outlook for retail sales remained favourable. While visitor arrivals should increase further in the coming months, improved labour market conditions and the Government's various measures to boost the momentum of the economic recovery, such as the disbursement of consumption vouchers, should render support to local consumption demand.

Further information

Table 1 presents the revised figures on value index and value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for May 2023 as well as the provisional figures for June 2023. The provisional figures on the value of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet as well as the corresponding year-on-year changes for the first half of 2023 are also shown.

Table 2 presents the revised figures on value of online retail sales for May 2023 as well as the provisional figures for June 2023. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first half of 2023 are also shown.

Table 3 presents the revised figures on volume index of retail sales for all retail outlets and by broad type of retail outlet for May 2023 as well as the provisional figures for June 2023. The provisional figures on year-on-year changes for the first half of 2023 are also shown.

Table 4 shows the movements of the value and volume of total retail sales in terms of the year-on-year rate of change for a month compared with

the same month in the preceding year based on the original series, and in terms of the rate of change for a three-month period compared with the preceding three-month period based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The classification of retail establishments follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

These retail sales statistics measure the sales receipts in respect of goods sold by local retail establishments and are primarily intended for gauging the short-term business performance of the local retail sector. Data on retail sales are collected from local retail establishments through the Monthly Survey of Retail Sales (MRS). Local retail establishments with and without physical shops are covered in MRS and their sales, both through conventional shops and online channels, are included in the retail sales statistics.

The retail sales statistics cover consumer spending on goods but not on services (such as those on housing, catering, medical care and health services, transport and communication, financial services, education and entertainment) which account for over 50% of the overall consumer spending. Moreover, they include spending on goods in Hong Kong by visitors but exclude spending outside Hong Kong by Hong Kong residents. Hence they should not be regarded as indicators for measuring overall consumer spending.

Users interested in the trend of overall consumer spending should refer to the data series of private consumption expenditure (PCE), which is a major component of the Gross Domestic Product published at quarterly intervals. Compiled from a wide range of data sources, PCE covers consumer spending on both goods (including goods purchased from all channels) and services by Hong Kong residents whether locally or abroad. Please refer to the C&SD publication "Gross Domestic Product (Quarterly)" for more details.

More detailed statistics are given in the "Report on Monthly Survey of Retail Sales". Users can browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD

(www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1080003&scode=530).

Users who have enquiries about the survey results may contact the Distribution Services Statistics Section of C&SD (Tel: 3903 7400; email: mrs@censtatd.gov.hk).

[Survey on Small and Medium-Sized](#)

Enterprises' Credit Conditions for Second Quarter 2023

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (August 1) the results of Survey on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)' Credit Conditions for the second quarter of 2023. According to the survey, the credit conditions of SMEs remained largely stable with little signs of prevalent stress.

Regarding SMEs' perception of banks' credit approval stance relative to six months ago, excluding respondents who answered "no idea/don't know", 78 per cent perceived a "similar" or "easier" credit approval stance in the second quarter of 2023, down from 85 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 1 in the Annex). 22 per cent perceived a "more difficult" credit approval stance, up from 15 per cent in the previous quarter. The perception of a more difficult credit approval stance may not necessarily reflect actual difficulties faced by SMEs in obtaining bank credit as the perception could be affected by a number of factors, such as media/news reports, business conditions and opinions of relatives and friends.

Of respondents with existing credit lines, 82 per cent reported that banks' stance on existing credit lines was "easier" or "unchanged" in the second quarter of 2023, compared with 79 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 2 in the Annex). 18 per cent of the respondents reported a "tighter" banks' stance on existing credit lines, compared with 21 per cent in the previous quarter. In this survey, a tighter stance on existing credit lines denotes a range of possible measures or arrangements, such as reducing unused and used credit lines, raising the interest rate, imposing additional collateral requirements, or shortening loan tenor. Therefore, respondents' indication of banks' stance on existing credit lines may not directly reflect banks' supply of credit to SMEs.

The survey also gauged the results of new credit applications from SMEs. 4 per cent of the respondents reported that they had applied for new bank credit during the second quarter of 2023. Among the respondents who had already known their application outcomes, 87 per cent reported fully or partially successful applications, compared with 89 per cent in the previous quarter (Chart 3 in the Annex). 13 per cent reported unsuccessful applications, compared with 11 per cent in the previous quarter.

Owing to small sample sizes of SMEs with existing credit lines (14 per cent of surveyed SMEs) and with new credit applications (4 per cent of surveyed SMEs) during the quarter, the results could be prone to large fluctuations, and hence should be interpreted with care.

About Survey on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)' Credit Conditions

In light of the importance of SMEs to the Hong Kong economy and concerns about potential funding difficulties facing SMEs over the past few years, the HKMA has appointed the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) to carry out this survey, starting from the third quarter of 2016. This survey is conducted on a quarterly basis, covering about 2 500 SMEs from different economic sectors each time. The results of this survey can help monitor the development of SMEs' access to bank credit from a demand-side perspective.

The results of this survey should be interpreted with caution. Similar to other opinion surveys, views collected in this survey may be affected by changes in sentiment due to idiosyncratic events that occurred over the survey period, which can make the results prone to fluctuations. Readers are advised to interpret the results together with other economic and financial information. In addition, views collected are limited to the expected direction of inter-quarter changes (e.g. "tighter", "no change" or "easier") without providing information about the magnitude of these changes.

Detailed tables and technical information of this survey are published on the website of the HKPC (www.smecc.hkpc.org).