

External merchandise trade statistics for February 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (March 26) the external merchandise trade statistics for February 2024. In February 2024, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year decreases, at 0.8% and 1.8% respectively.

As the trade flows tend to show greater volatilities in the first two months of a year due to the timing of the Lunar New Year, it is more appropriate to analyse the trade figures for January and February taken together in making year-on-year comparison.

Taking January and February of 2024 together, the value of total exports of goods increased by 16.6% over the same period in 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 9.7%. A visible trade deficit of \$38.1 billion, equivalent to 5.4% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first two months of 2024.

In February 2024, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 0.8% over a year earlier to \$284.1 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 33.6% in January 2024. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 1.8% over a year earlier to \$325.7 billion in February 2024, after a year-on-year increase of 21.7% in January 2024. A visible trade deficit of \$41.7 billion, equivalent to 12.8% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in February 2024.

Comparing the three-month period ending February 2024 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.5%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 3.3%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing February 2024 with February 2023, total exports to Asia as a whole dropped by 1.3%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Taiwan (-20.3%), Korea (-19.5%), Vietnam (-18.7%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-0.6%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Thailand (+62.2%), India (+17.9%) and the Philippines (+11.6%).

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 (+11.8%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to Australia (-36.2%) and the Netherlands (-10.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the

values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (-32.3%), the Mainland (-10.0%) and Taiwan (-8.4%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of imports from Korea (+87.6%), Singapore (+27.8%) and Vietnam (+24.2%).

For the first two months of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (+53.1%), India (+34.7%), the Mainland (+25.7%), the United Arab Emirates (+22.8%) and the USA (+11.7%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to the Netherlands (-34.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (+53.3%), Vietnam (+28.9%), the USA (+19.8%), Thailand (+16.4%), Singapore (+16.2%) and the Mainland (+13.6%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of imports from Malaysia (-14.0%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing February 2024 with February 2023, decreases 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 \$3.5 billion or -2.6%) and "non-ferrous metals" (by \$2.5 billion or -38.1%). On the other hand, an increase was registered in the value of exports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$3.5 billion or +10.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, decreases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$3.6 billion or -9.4%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$3.1 billion or -24.1%). On the other hand, an increase was registered in the value of imports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$5.8 billion or +4.4%).

For the first two months of 2024 as a whole, 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 \$52.1 billion or +19.7%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$13.7 billion or +18.2%).

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 \$33.6 billion or +12.6%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$8.9 billion or +11.7%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that taking the first two months of 2024 together, the value of merchandise exports posted double-digit growth against a very low base of comparison a year ago. Exports to the Mainland and the United States rose notably, while those to the European Union fell. Those to other major Asian markets showed mixed performance.

Looking ahead, while slow global economic growth and geopolitical tensions will continue to constrain Hong Kong's export performance in the near term, the expected easing of global monetary conditions later in the year may provide some support. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for February 2024. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2021 to February 2024, and Table 3 gives the seasonally adjusted series for the same period.

The values of total exports of goods to 10 main destinations for February 2024 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 February 2024.

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 February 2024 will be released in mid-April 2024.

The February 2024 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in February 2024 and will be available in early April 2024. Users can browse and download the report at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1020005&scode=230).

Enquiries on merchandise trade statistics may be directed to the Trade Analysis Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4691).