

External merchandise trade statistics for November 2018

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (December 27) the external merchandise trade statistics for November 2018. In November 2018, the value of Hong Kong's total exports of goods decreased by 0.8%, whereas the value of imports of goods increased by 0.5% over a year earlier.

In November 2018, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 0.8% over a year earlier to \$364.3 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 14.6% in October 2018. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 0.5% over a year earlier to \$409.3 billion in November 2018, after a year-on-year increase of 13.1% in October 2018. A visible trade deficit of \$45.0 billion, equivalent to 11.0% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in November 2018.

For the first 11 months of 2018 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods rose by 8.6% over the same period in 2017. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 10.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$511.7 billion, equivalent to 11.8% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first 11 months of 2018.

Comparing the three-month period ending November 2018 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 1.4%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods decreased by 3.6%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing November 2018 with November 2017, total exports to Asia as a whole dropped by 3.6%. In this region, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (-29.1%), Vietnam (-8.7%), Taiwan (-5.3%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (-5.0%). On the other hand, increases were recorded in the values of total exports to Thailand (+26.8%), Malaysia (+25.1%), Singapore (+20.4%) and Japan (+3.9%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular the United Kingdom (+12.1%) and the USA (+5.0%). Concurrently, a decrease was registered in the value of total exports to Germany (-4.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+29.4%), Singapore (+19.4%), the USA (+6.3%) and the Mainland (+1.0%). Concurrently, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from Korea (-24.7%), the Philippines (-15.4%) and Taiwan (-14.0%).

For the first 11 months of 2018 as a whole, year-on-year increases were

registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Thailand (+12.1%), Singapore (+11.8%), the Mainland (+10.4%), the Netherlands (+9.5%), the USA (+9.0%) and Vietnam (+6.7%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports to India (-13.1%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Malaysia (+71.4%), Korea (+14.4%), Singapore (+9.8%), the USA (+9.0%), the Mainland (+9.0%) and Taiwan (+6.7%). On the other hand, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of imports from India (-13.2%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing November 2018 with November 2017, decreases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$4.7 billion or -26.7%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$0.6 billion or -0.4%) and "textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles and related products" (by \$0.5 billion or -10.8%). However, an increase was registered in the value of total exports of "professional, scientific and controlling instruments and apparatus" (by \$1.0 billion or 12.0%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "petroleum, petroleum products and related materials" (by \$2.7 billion or 38.1%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$2.4 billion or 1.7%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$1.2 billion or 21.4%). However, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$3.7 billion or -4.9%).

For the first 11 months of 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 \$205.3 billion or 16.3%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$46.0 billion or 12.6%) and "miscellaneous manufactured articles (mainly jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares)" (by \$30.2 billion or 16.1%). However, a year-on-year decrease was registered in the value of total exports of "non-metallic mineral manufactures" (by \$19.5 billion or -10.8%).

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 \$199.8 billion or 14.0%), "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$65.3 billion or 20.5%) and "petroleum, petroleum products and related materials" (by \$24.9 billion or 38.0%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman noted that the performance of merchandise trade

has been volatile over the past few months. The value of merchandise exports, after a notable pick-up in October, eased sharply to show a modest year-on-year decline in November. Exports to the major advanced economies including the US grew by various degrees, but the performance of other markets was mixed.

Looking ahead, merchandise exports could be subject to pressures as global economic growth continues to moderate. Despite the recent cooling of the US-Mainland trade tensions following the agreement reached in early December, the situation is still fluid and may add to the downside risks. 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 November 2018. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2015 to November 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 November 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 November 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 November 2018 will be released in mid-January 2019.

The November 2018 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in November 2018 and will be available in mid-January 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).