

HAD opens temporary cold shelters

In view of the cold weather, the Home Affairs Department has opened 18 temporary cold shelters in various districts today (January 25) for people in need of the service. The temporary shelters will remain open when the Cold Weather Warning is in force.

Clean mattresses and blankets/quilts, hot meals and hot water will be provided to shelter users free of charge during the opening of temporary shelters.

To ensure that cold shelter users can rest in a quiet and undisturbed environment, members of the public or agencies wishing to make donations to shelter users are requested to register with the staff of the shelter first. Donors will then be directed to place the donated items at a specified indoor location. The staff will help notify the shelter users to collect the items on their own.

Anyone seeking temporary refuge or with any questions about the donation arrangements at the cold shelters may call the department's hotline 2572 8427 for more information.

The 18 temporary cold shelters are located at:

Hong Kong Island:

Central and Western:

Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall
3/F, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex,
2 High Street, Sai Ying Pun

Eastern:

Causeway Bay Community Centre
3/F, 7 Fook Yum Road, Causeway Bay

Southern:

Lei Tung Community Hall
Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

Wan Chai:

Wan Chai Activities Centre
LG/F, Wan Chai Market, 258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

Kowloon:

Kowloon City:

Hung Hom Community Hall
1/F, Kowloon City Government Offices,
42 Bailey Street, Hung Hom

Kwun Tong:

Lam Tin (West) Estate Community Centre
71 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin

Sham Shui Po:

Nam Cheong District Community Centre
1 Cheong San Lane, Sham Shui Po

Wong Tai Sin:

Tsz Wan Shan (South) Estate Community Centre
45 Wan Wah Street, Tsz Wan Shan

Yau Tsim Mong:

Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre
60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei

New Territories:

Islands:

Tung Chung Community Hall
G/F, Tung Chung Municipal Services Building, 39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung

Kwai Tsing:

Tai Wo Hau Estate Community Centre
15 Tai Wo Hau Road, Kwai Chung

North:

Cheung Wah Community Hall
Cheung Wah Estate, Fanling

Sai Kung:

Hang Hau Community Hall
G/F, Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Government Complex,
38 Pui Shing Road, Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O

Sha Tin:

Lung Hang Estate Community Centre
Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin

Tai Po:

Tai Po Community Centre
2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Tsuen Wan:

Lei Muk Shue Community Hall
G/F, Hong Shue House, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan

Tuen Mun:

Butterfly Bay Community Centre
Butterfly Estate (near Tip Sum House), Tuen Mun

Yuen Long:

Commencement of flat selections for Sale of Home Ownership Scheme Flats 2023 and live-in requirements for subsidised sale flats

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

Flat selections for Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2023 (HOS 2023) of the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will commence from January 31. Meanwhile, the HA reminds owners of subsidised sale flats (SSFs) about the live-in requirements of their flats.

Arrangements of flat selections for HOS 2023

"Flat selections for HOS 2023 will commence from January 31. The HA will invite eligible applicants in batches to select flats for sale under HOS 2023 according to the priority under the respective application category at the designated time at the Housing Authority Customer Service Centre (HACSC) in Lok Fu," a spokesman for the HA said.

Flats for sale under HOS 2023 include a total of 9 154 flats from six new HOS developments (Kai Yuet Court in Kai Tak; On Ying Court, On Lai Court and On Wah Court in Kwun Tong; Siu Tsui Court in Tuen Mun and Long Tin Court in Yuen Long); about 60 rescinded flats from Kam Chun Court in Ma On Shan and Kai Cheung Court in Diamond Hill sold under HOS 2020 as well as Yu Nga Court in Tung Chung and Yu Tak Court in Sha Tin sold under HOS 2022; and a new batch of about 400 recovered Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) flats .

"Sales brochures (and sales pamphlets for recovered TPS flats) covering greater details and price lists will be made available for public collection at the HACSC in Lok Fu and for viewing on the HA/Housing Department (HD)'s designated websites starting seven days before commencement up to the end of the flat selection period for HOS 2023. Project models on the new developments and doll houses of HOS typical flats, virtual videos of samples of HOS flats, virtual reality tours of the interior of samples of recovered TPS flats, exhibition panels and other information on HOS developments and TPS estates will be available for public viewing at the HACSC in Lok Fu and on the HA/HD's designated websites," the spokesman said.

During the flat selection period, photos and video clips of the interior

of all recovered TPS flats for sale will be provided at the HACSC in Lok Fu and on the HA/HD's designated websites. Arrangements will be made with relevant stakeholders to facilitate the viewing of the recovered TPS flats put up for sale under HOS 2023 as far as practicable.

Mortgage arrangements

The HA Subsidised Housing Committee earlier endorsed the relaxation of the mortgage arrangements for SSFs, allowing purchasers to obtain mortgage loans for a longer term. For SSFs sold on the primary market, the maximum mortgage default guarantee period will be extended from 25 years to 30 years for TPS flats; and the maximum mortgage repayment period from 25 years to 30 years for new HOS/Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme projects and TPS flats. The relaxation will be applicable to the six new HOS developments and recovered TPS flats for sale under HOS 2023.

Live-in requirements for SSFs

The HA would like to remind owners of the live-in requirements for all SSFs, including HOS flats. According to the Agreement for Sale and Purchase (ASP) made between the owner of SSFs and the HA for the purchase of the flat, the flat concerned shall be occupied by the owner and all members of the family named in the Application Form for the purchase of the flat. If the owner or any family member ceases to actually or permanently live in the flat without the prior written consent of the HA, the HA has the right to require the owner to assign the flat back to the HA at the costs and expenses of the owner. In addition, if the owner is found to have breached any of the requirements concerned, the HA will not approve the application for the issuance of a Certificate of Availability for Sale (CAS)/Letter of Nomination in respect of the flat concerned under the HOS Secondary Market Scheme (SMS) and any CAS issued will be revoked. The owner concerned will not be able to sell the flat under the SMS.

"The HA has been taking stringent follow-up actions on cases of suspected breaches of the live-in requirements which includes conducting investigations on complaints received. After considering the circumstances of individual cases, appropriate actions will be taken, which include rejecting the processing of an application for CAS for the case concerned so that the transaction concerned cannot be proceeded with. Amongst some recent cases, the owner of one flat concerned had surrendered to the HA all the profits obtained from the resale of the flat. In view of special circumstances of some individual cases, e.g. the owner is hospitalised due to sickness or needs to take care of a family member with serious health problems, rendering him unable to handle decoration and removal issues, the HA may withhold the enforcement actions for non-compliance of the requirement under the ASP and require the owner to remedy the breach by moving in the flat concerned within a specified time period. The HA will also monitor the live-in condition of the flat concerned to ensure the breach has been remedied," the spokesman said.

The live-in requirements have been set out in the application guide and

the ASP of relevant sale exercises. Applicants of SSFs are required to sign a declaration at the time of flat selection to declare and undertake that they will notify all the members of the family named in the application form to comply with the live-in requirements. The HD will step up publicity and remind applicants/owners of SSFs regarding the live-in requirements, which includes setting out the details of the live-in requirements in sales/application documents, HA/HD's designated websites, flat selection letter, notice for completion of sale and purchase, letters related to the application for a CAS; and sending a letter to owners who have recently been issued with a CAS reminding them of the live-in requirements. The HA has also maintained close liaison with the Estate Agents Authority (EAA) and the EAA will issue a letter to its licensees reminding them of the live-in requirements of SSFs.

External merchandise trade statistics for December 2023

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (January 25) the external merchandise trade statistics for December 2023. In December 2023, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 11.0% and 11.6% respectively.

In December 2023, the value of total exports of goods increased by 11.0% over a year earlier to \$386.4 billion, after a year-on-year increase of 7.4% in November 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 11.6% over a year earlier to \$446.3 billion in December 2023, after a year-on-year increase of 7.1% in November 2023. A visible trade deficit of \$59.9 billion, equivalent to 13.4% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in December 2023.

For 2023 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 7.8% over 2022. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 5.7%. A visible trade deficit of \$467.6 billion, equivalent to 10.1% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in 2023.

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2023 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 3.3%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 2.6%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing December 2023 with December 2022, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 10.9%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (+46.1%), Thailand (+39.9%), Taiwan (+39.1%), Vietnam (+26.5%) and the mainland of

China (the Mainland) (+8.4%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to Korea (-24.0%).

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 (+25.6%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to Germany (-9.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Vietnam (+77.9%), Korea (+42.3%), Thailand (+17.3%), the USA (+15.4%) and the Mainland (+13.4%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from the Philippines (-25.4%) and Singapore (-11.1%).

For 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Singapore (-21.4%), Japan (-17.7%), Taiwan (-9.9%), the Mainland (-9.7%) and Korea (-9.5%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the United Arab Emirates (+8.9%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-22.8%), Singapore (-17.3%), the Philippines (-15.7%), Malaysia (-15.3%), Taiwan (-10.5%) and the Mainland (-2.7%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing December 2023 with December 2022, increases were registered in the values of total exports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "professional, scientific and controlling instruments and apparatus" (by \$7.9 billion or +84.7%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$7.8 billion or +18.7%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of most principal commodity divisions, in particular "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$10.3 billion or +23.5%), "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$7.0 billion or +3.6%) and "power generating machinery and equipment" (by \$6.4 billion or +65.0%).

For 2023 as a whole, year-on-year 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 \$237.6 billion or -10.7%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$80.7 billion or -16.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year 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 \$227.4 billion or -10.1%) and "office machines and

automatic data processing machines" (by \$91.4 billion or -22.0%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports recorded a year-on-year increase in December 2023 against a low base of comparison. Exports to the Mainland and the United States rose visibly, and those to the European Union registered a marginal increase. Those to other major Asian markets recorded mixed performance.

Looking ahead, factors including heightened geopolitical tensions and slowing global economic growth will continue to weigh on Hong Kong's export performance in the near term. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for December 2023. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2020 to December 2023, 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 2023 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 2023.

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 2023 will be released in mid-February 2024.

The December 2023 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in December 2023 and will be available in early February 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).

CE meets Minister of National Financial Regulatory Administration (with photo)

â€‹The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, met the Minister of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, Mr Li Yunze, today (January 25) to exchange views on further strengthening Hong Kong's financial co-operation with the Mainland. Also attending the meeting was the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui.

Mr Lee welcomed Mr Li's visit to Hong Kong with his delegation and their participation in the 17th Asian Financial Forum. Mr Lee expressed his gratitude to the National Financial Regulatory Administration for fully supporting Hong Kong to leverage its unique advantages under the "one country, two systems" principle, so as to continuously reinforce and enhance Hong Kong's status as an international financial centre. The initiatives include further deepening the connectivity between the financial markets in the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao; enhancing the opening up of Mainland's banking and insurance sectors to Hong Kong and Macao; supporting Hong Kong in consolidating its role as an offshore Renminbi business hub, and supporting Chinese financial institutions to anchor and serve the Hong Kong market.

Mr Lee said that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will continue to make every effort to consolidate and strengthen Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre, and continuously enhance the competitiveness of the financial services industry. Hong Kong will also further deepen financial co-operation with the Mainland and actively integrate into the national development of the reforming and opening-up of the financial market, he added.



Cluster of Candida auris cases in United Christian Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for United Christian Hospital (UCH) made the following announcement today (January 25):

A 94-year-old female patient in the geriatric ward was found to carry *Candida auris* during her admission screening on January 21. In accordance with prevailing guidelines, UCH commenced a contact tracing investigation and found three more female patients, aged 68 to 94, carrying *Candida auris* without signs of infection. Two of them had been transferred to Haven of Hope Hospital for treatment. Currently, three patients are being treated in isolation in UCH and are in stable condition. One patient passed away due to her underlying disease.

UCH will continue the contact tracing in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. The following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the wards concerned in both hospitals:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures; and
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff, patients and visitors.

UCH has reported the cases to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for follow up. Both hospitals will continue to closely monitor the situation.