

## TAC's response to Chief Executive in Council's decision to approve franchised bus operators' fare increases

The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

In response to the Chief Executive in Council's decision to approve fare increase applications from three franchised bus operators today (December 17), the Chairman of the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC), Professor Stephen Cheung, said the TAC appreciated that the Government has handled the fare increase applications from franchised bus operators in a prudent manner as it has always been, taking into account a basket of factors before arriving at the decision.

Professor Cheung said, "The TAC acknowledges that timely implementation of fare increases at suitable rates is needed for franchised bus operators to maintain adequate financial resources, not only to continue to deliver safe, efficient, and reliable bus services, but also to maintain their professional and high-quality workforce by improving remuneration packages, as well as to make necessary investments to enhance their services to ensure that franchised bus services could stay in tune with the latest societal and economic needs, and complement the long-term development of Hong Kong.

"In respect of this round of fare increase, the TAC notices that the Government has exercised its gatekeeper role, reducing the rates of increase of the two major franchises by a certain extent. The TAC agrees that the Government has endeavoured to strike a balance between minimising the impact on people's livelihood and maintaining reasonable financial capability of franchised bus operators for continuous investments. The TAC recommends that the Government should continue to encourage and assist franchised bus operators in raising revenue and reducing expenditure through a multipronged approach, including enhancing the operational efficiency by optimising bus networks and expanding sources of non-farebox revenue to alleviate the pressure for fare increases," Professor Cheung continued.

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## Sai Wan Ho Sports Centre to reopen

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 17) that Sai Wan Ho Sports Centre in Eastern District will reopen for public use from December 24 (Tuesday). This venue was temporarily closed earlier for refurbishment works.

Members of the public can reserve these reopened fee-charging facilities from tomorrow (December 18) via the SmartPLAY website ([www.smartplay.lcsd.gov.hk/home](http://www.smartplay.lcsd.gov.hk/home)), the mobile app (My SmartPLAY), Smart Self-service Stations, or via the service counters at leisure venues and the District Leisure Services Offices. For enquiries, please contact the venue staff at 2569 7330.

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## Chain volume measures of Gross Domestic Product by economic activity for the third quarter of 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (December 17) the preliminary figures of chain volume measures of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by economic activity for the third quarter of 2024.

GDP figures by economic activity show the value of production in respect of individual economic activities. The value of production is measured by value added or net output, which is calculated by deducting intermediate input consumed in the process of production from the gross value of output. Volume measures of GDP by economic activity, expressed in terms of chain volume measures net of the effect of price changes, enable analysis of the output growth profiles of individual economic sectors in real terms.

According to the preliminary figures, overall GDP increased by 1.8% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, compared with the 3.2% increase in the second quarter of 2024.

Analysed by constituent services sector and on a year-on-year comparison, value added in respect of all the services activities taken together increased by 1.9% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, similar to the growth of 2.0% in the second quarter.

Value added in the import and export, wholesale and retail trades sector increased by 0.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, as against the marginally decrease of 0.1% in the second quarter.

Value added in the accommodation and food services sector dropped by 4.6% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 from a year earlier, compared with the decline of 6.4% in the second quarter.

Value added in the transportation, storage, postal and courier services sector increased by 7.0% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, compared with the increase of 10.6% in the second quarter.

Value added in the information and communications sector increased by 3.2% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, compared with the rise of 2.1% in the second quarter.

Value added in the financing and insurance sector increased by 1.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, compared with the increase of 0.2% in the second quarter.

Value added in the real estate, professional and business services sector registered a decrease of 0.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 from a year earlier, as against the rise of 2.7% in the second quarter.

Value added in the public administration, social and personal services sector rose by 2.6% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, compared with the increase of 2.9% in the second quarter.

As for sectors other than the services sectors, value added in the local manufacturing sector marginally decreased by 0.1% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 from a year earlier, as against the increase of 0.7% in the second quarter.

Value added in the electricity, gas and water supply, and waste management sector increased by 2.7% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 over a year earlier, after the increase of 1.6% in the second quarter.

Value added in the construction sector decreased by 0.8% in real terms in the third quarter of 2024 from a year earlier, as against the increase of 13.2% in the second quarter.

#### Further information

The year-on-year percentage changes of GDP by economic activity in real terms from the third quarter of 2023 to the third quarter of 2024 are shown in Table 1. More detailed statistics are given in the report "Gross Domestic Product by Economic Activity". Users can browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1030004&scode=250](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1030004&scode=250)). For enquiries about statistics on GDP by economic activity, please call the National Income Branch (2) of the C&SD at 3903 7005.

Figures of chain volume measures of GDP by economic activity for the third quarter of 2024 are only preliminary at this stage. When more data become available, the preliminary figures will be revised accordingly and can be found at the C&SD website ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode250.html](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode250.html)).

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# Unemployment and underemployment statistics for September – November 2024

According to the latest labour force statistics (i.e. provisional figures for September – November 2024) released today (December 17) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stood at 3.1% in September – November 2024, same as that in August – October 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1% in the two periods.

Comparing September – November 2024 with August – October 2024, movements in the unemployment rate (not seasonally adjusted) and underemployment rate in different industry sectors varied, but the magnitudes were generally not large.

Total employment increased by around 4 700 from 3 707 100 in August – October 2024 to 3 711 800 in September – November 2024. Over the same period, the labour force also increased by around 3 600 from 3 827 900 to 3 831 500.

The number of unemployed persons (not seasonally adjusted) decreased by around 1 000 from 120 700 in August – October 2024 to 119 700 in September – November 2024. Over the same period, the number of underemployed persons also decreased by around 600 from 42 300 to 41 700.

## Commentary

Commenting on the latest unemployment figures, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, said, "The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate stayed low at 3.1% in September – November 2024, same as August – October 2024. The underemployment rate also remained unchanged at 1.1%. The labour force and total employment bounced back by 3 600 and 4 700 to 3 831 500 and 3 711 800 respectively. The number of unemployed persons decreased by 1 000 to 119 700."

The unemployment rates of various sectors showed diverse movements in September – November 2024 compared with the preceding three-month period. More notable increases in the unemployment rates were seen in the decoration, repair and maintenance for buildings sector; the insurance sector; and the postal and courier activities sector. More visible declines in the unemployment rates were observed in the warehousing and support activities for transportation sector and the arts, entertainment and recreation sector.

Looking ahead, Mr Sun said, "The labour market should remain largely stable in the near term, though the situation in some sectors might be more affected by increased uncertainties in the global economy and escalation in trade tension."

## Further information

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were compiled from the findings of the continuous General Household Survey.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organization. The employed population covers all employers, self-employed persons, employees (including full-time, part-time, casual workers, etc.) and unpaid family workers. Unemployed persons by industry (or occupation) are classified according to their previous industry (or occupation).

The survey for September – November 2024 covered a sample of some 26 000 households or 69 000 persons, selected in accordance with a scientifically designed sampling scheme to represent the population of Hong Kong. Labour force statistics compiled from this sample represented the situation in the moving three-month period of September to November 2024.

Data on labour force characteristics were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the sampled households.

Statistical tables on the latest labour force statistics can be downloaded at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode200.html)). More detailed analysis of the labour force characteristics is given in the "Quarterly Report on General Household Survey" which is published four times a year. The latest issue of the report contains statistics for the quarter July – September 2024 while the next issue covering the quarter October – December 2024 will be available by end February 2025. Users can also browse and download this publication at the website of the C&SD ([www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200](http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/EIndexbySubject.html?pcode=B1050001&scode=200)).

For enquiries about labour force statistics, please contact the General Household Survey Section (3) of the C&SD (Tel: 2887 5508 or email: [ghs@censtatd.gov.hk](mailto:ghs@censtatd.gov.hk)).

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## **Landlord convicted of overcharging subdivided unit tenant for water**

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced that a landlord of a subdivided flat in Kwun Tong, Kowloon, was convicted today (December 17) of overcharging its subdivided unit (SDU) tenants for water, in contravention of regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations. The owner pleaded guilty to 14 counts of offences at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts.

This is the 24th similar conviction since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$22,000.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) has strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement, receipt or payment record for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of up to \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for the installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The water fee deposit and the charge for providing a meter for each separate water meter installed under the Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Subdivided Units will be waived. Individual water bills will be provided for each water meter account. The first 12 cubic metres of water are free at four-month intervals. SDU tenants can contact the WSD to request separate water meters. Upon receiving such requests, the WSD will contact the landlords for the installation of separate meters. If the landlords refuse, the WSD may require them to provide information on the recovery of water charges from their tenants in suspected overcharging cases. Details of the scheme can be obtained from the WSD website ([www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html](http://www.wsd.gov.hk/en/customer-services/application-for-water-supply/pilot-scheme-for-installation-of-separate-water-me/index.html)).

The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow-up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for the installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.