

CHP investigates outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection at primary school

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (November 27) investigating an outbreak of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) at a primary school in Sau Mau Ping, and appeals to members of the public and staff of institutions to stay alert and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene.

The outbreak involves 24 students, comprising 15 males and nine females aged 6 to 11. They developed symptoms since November 4. Seven of them sought medical attention. All are in stable condition and none required hospitalisation.

The CHP has provided preventive advice against URTI to the primary school, such as advising the school to arrange cleaning and disinfection, to open windows where appropriate for better ventilation and to separate affected students from other students, etc. The school has been placed under medical surveillance.

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- For high-risk persons (e.g. persons with underlying medical conditions or persons who are immunocompromised), wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and those with chronic diseases, should consult a doctor promptly if they develop symptoms of respiratory tract infection.

External merchandise trade statistics for October 2023

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (November 27) the external merchandise trade statistics for October 2023. In October 2023, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 1.4% and 2.6% respectively.

In October 2023, the value of total exports of goods increased by 1.4% over a year earlier to \$379.9 billion, after a year-on-year decrease of 5.3% in September 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 2.6% over a year earlier to \$405.6 billion in October 2023, after a year-on-year decrease of 0.4% in September 2023. A visible trade deficit of \$25.8 billion, equivalent to 6.3% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in October 2023.

For the first 10 months of 2023 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods decreased by 11.0% over the same period in 2022. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods decreased by 8.6%. A visible trade deficit of \$380.2 billion, equivalent to 10.0% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first 10 months of 2023.

Comparing the three-month period ending October 2023 with the preceding three months on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.8%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 4.8%.

Analysis by country/territory

Comparing October 2023 with October 2022, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 5.2%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular India (+28.6%), Vietnam (+15.2%), Thailand (+13.6%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+5.6%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to Singapore (-26.8%), the Philippines (-18.6%) and Taiwan (-6.5%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations in other regions, in particular Netherlands (-37.1%) and the United Kingdom (-2.0%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the USA (+0.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Thailand (+27.7%), Singapore (+11.8%), Taiwan (+10.7%), Malaysia (+2.7%) and the Mainland (+2.5%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from the Philippines (-36.5%) and Korea (-16.6%).

For the first 10 months of 2023 as a whole, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations, in particular Singapore (-23.9%), Japan (-20.1%), Taiwan (-14.0%), the Mainland (-13.7%) and the USA (-10.5%). On the other hand, an increase was recorded in the value of total exports to the United Arab Emirates (+10.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year decreases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (-29.3%), Singapore (-20.8%), Vietnam (-18.5%), Malaysia (-16.6%), the Philippines (-13.0%) and the Mainland (-5.4%).

Analysis by major commodity

Comparing October 2023 with October 2022, increases were registered in the values of total exports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "non-ferrous metals" (by \$4.6 billion or +139.8%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$4.5 billion or +11.5%). On the other hand, a decrease was registered in the value of exports of "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$5.9 billion or -3.3%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports of some principal commodity divisions, in particular "electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof" (by \$8.0 billion or +4.7%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$6.1 billion or +11.5%). On the other hand, a decrease was registered in the value of imports of "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$5.6 billion or -16.1%).

For the first 10 months of 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 \$263.6 billion or -14.0%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$81.8 billion or -19.7%).

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 \$247.0 billion or -13.0%) and "office machines and automatic data processing machines" (by \$90.2 billion or -25.6%).

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that while the value of merchandise exports

turned to a modest year-on-year increase in October 2023, overall export performance largely remained weak. Exports to the Mainland and the United States rose, while those to the European Union continued to fall notably. Those to other major Asian markets recorded mixed performance.

Looking ahead, the difficult external environment amid heightened geopolitical tensions and tight financial conditions 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 October 2023. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2020 to October 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 October 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 October 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 October 2023 will be released in mid-December 2023.

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

[Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, November 27, 2023 is 104.8 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, November 25, 2023 was 104.8 (same as last Friday's index).

CSD introduces Assistant Officer II Language Test (Chinese / English) from December 1

The Correctional Services Department (CSD) announced today (November 27) that the Assistant Officer II Language Test (Chinese / English) will be introduced with effect from December 1 to provide applicants with an additional way to meet the language proficiency requirements.

The Language Test, consisting of a Chinese Language written test and an English Language written test, is benchmarked against Level 2 in Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. Each test comprises two parts: "Practical Writing" to test writing and logical thinking abilities, and "Multiple Choice" questions to test abilities of error identification, sentence completion and paragraph improvement. An applicant passing the Language Test will be deemed to have met the Assistant Officer II language proficiency requirements. The result will be permanently valid for the application for Assistant Officer II. Applicants can apply to take the Language Test through the link on the CSD website.

The CSD has been adopting proactive recruitment strategies to attract talent. New entry physical fitness test standards for Officer and Assistant Officer II have been adopted since mid-September this year. For the convenience of applicants and to expedite its recruitment selection process, the department has also streamlined the recruitment procedures so that the physical fitness test, the Basic Law and National Security Law Test, the group interview and the selection interview for Assistant Officer II, which were conducted over two separate days previously, can now be completed within a single day.

The CSD will continue to enhance publicity and organise various recruitment activities including recruitment talks, workshops and exhibitions as well as recruitment talks at universities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to attract more people to join the CSD.

Please visit the following website for details of the Language Test: www.csd.gov.hk/english/recruit/aoii_language_test/aoii_language_test.html.

Engagement session on “The Chief Executive’s 2023 Policy Address” for ethnic minorities (with photos)

The Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, attended the engagement session on "The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address" for representatives of ethnic minorities (EMs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing services to EMs held at the Central Government Offices today (November 27). She introduced the policy measures related to the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) in the Policy Address to the participants. She also engaged in interactive discussions with the participants and listened to their views, and introduced the significance of the first District Council Election after improving the district governance system.

During the engagement session, Miss Mak introduced the key initiatives in the Policy Address on supporting EMs to integrate into the community. She emphasised that the Government attached great importance to the needs of EMs and had been striving to support their integration into the community so as to enable them to unleash their potential. She said that the Home Affairs Department would set up two additional support service centres for EMs (EM centres), bringing the total number of EM centres to 10; and invite each of the 10 EM centres to set up one EM Care Team to proactively reach out to EM households, understanding their needs and introducing to them public services.

Miss Mak said that the Government was committed to building a caring and inclusive society and would continue to provide services and support to facilitate EMs’ integration into the local community and access to public services.

Members of the Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony and representatives of the NGOs operating the EM centres were invited to the engagement session. These NGOs are Hong Kong Christian Service, Hong Kong Community Network, Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, International Social Service Hong Kong Branch, New Home Association, Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council and Yuen Long Town Hall. The participants welcomed the new initiatives in the Policy Address to enhance support to EMs and provided valuable advice and suggestions. Miss Mak expressed her gratitude to the participants for their continuous support for racial harmony and reiterated the emphasis the Government had placed on supporting the EMs.

The 2023 District Council Ordinary Election is approaching. Miss Mak took the opportunity to explain again to the participants the significance of the Election and to call on the participants and their families to cast their votes on December 10 to elect capable District Council members who are committed to serving the public. She also appealed to the participants to join the activities organised by the District Council, in order to unite the

efforts of all parties in building a caring and inclusive society.

