

## **Company and its director fined \$78,000 for contravening Employment Ordinance**

Red Health Products Company Limited and its director were prosecuted by the Labour Department (LD) for violation of the requirements under the Employment Ordinance (EO). The company and its director pleaded guilty at the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (April 25) and were fined a total sum of \$78,000.

The company wilfully and without reasonable excuse contravened the requirements of the EO, failing to pay two employees' wages and payment in lieu of notice within seven days after the expiry of the wage periods and termination of employment, as well as end-of-year payment and annual leave pay within the statutory time limit, totalling about \$220,000. The company also failed to pay the awarded sums of about \$241,000 in total to the two employees within 14 days after the date set by the Labour Tribunal (LT). The director concerned was prosecuted and convicted for his consent, connivance or neglect in the above wage and default award offences.

"The ruling will disseminate a strong message to all employers, directors and responsible officers of companies that they have to pay wages and termination payments to employees within the statutory time limit stipulated in the EO, as well as the sums awarded by the LT or the Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board," a spokesman for the LD said.

"The LD will not tolerate these offences and will spare no effort in enforcing the law and safeguarding employees' statutory rights," the spokesman added.

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## **Cross-boundary passenger traffic estimation and arrangements announced for Labour Day festive period**

The Immigration Department (ImmD) estimates that around 5.9 million passengers (including Hong Kong residents and visitors) will pass through Hong Kong's sea, land and air control points during the upcoming Labour Day festive period (from April 30 to May 5). The ImmD, in consultation with the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection, estimates that around 5.05 million passengers will pass through land boundary control points. The number of outbound passengers and inbound passengers using land boundary control points will be relatively higher on May 1 (Wednesday), with

around 481 000 passengers and 544 000 passengers respectively.

The ImmD estimates that the passenger traffic at the Lo Wu Control Point, the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Control Point will be heavy, with a daily average forecast of about 203 000, 166 000 and 133 000 passengers respectively.

To cope with the anticipated heavy traffic during the festive period, the ImmD has minimised leave for frontline officers for the flexible deployment and operation of extra clearance counters and kiosks. Additional security guards will also be deployed to provide crowd management support.

Furthermore, the ImmD, the Police, the Customs and Excise Department and the MTR Corporation Limited will set up a joint command centre at the Lo Wu Control Point to make necessary arrangements. The ImmD will also establish close communication with the Mainland authorities, such as the Shenzhen General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection. To ensure a smooth passenger traffic flow, passenger conditions will be closely monitored and appropriate traffic diversion plans will be adopted when necessary.

To avoid congestion and a longer than usual waiting time for immigration clearance, the ImmD advises all land boundary passengers to plan in advance, avoid making their journeys during busy periods and keep track of radio and TV broadcasts on traffic conditions at various control points. The expected busy times at boundary control points are available on the website of the ImmD at [www.immd.gov.hk](http://www.immd.gov.hk). Furthermore, passengers may also check the estimated waiting times at each land boundary control point at any time or place via the Immigration Mobile Application (ImmD Mobile App). They can then plan their trips effectively and save time queuing at control points. The ImmD Mobile App can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple App Store (supports iOS version 11.0 or above), Google Play (supports Android version 8.0 or above), Huawei AppGallery (supports Android version 8.0 or above) and the APK file available on the ImmD website. Passengers can download the ImmD Mobile App by scanning the QR code (see Annex) or via the ImmD website, [www.immd.gov.hk](http://www.immd.gov.hk). In addition, information on public transport services to and from various control points is available on the Transport Department website at [www.td.gov.hk](http://www.td.gov.hk).

For travellers making journeys to the Mainland, the ImmD reminds them to carry their proof of identity and valid travel documents for crossing the boundary. Hong Kong residents should also check the validity of their Home Visit Permits. Non-permanent residents must carry their valid smart identity card as well as their Document of Identity for Visa Purposes or valid travel document.

Holders of the acknowledgement receipt issued due to reported loss or replacement of their Hong Kong identity cards, or children under 11 years old who hold Hong Kong identity cards, should carry a valid travel document or Re-entry Permit.

About 700 e-Channels have been installed at various control points. Hong

Kong residents enrolled for the Express e-Channel should re-enrol if they have been issued with a new identity card. Furthermore, the Contactless e-Channel service is available at all control points now. All eligible Hong Kong residents, after enrolment, can generate an encrypted QR code through the Contactless e-Channel mobile application to enter the e-Channel, and then verify their identity with the facial verification technology for automated immigration clearance.

In addition, all control points have introduced self-service departures for visitors to Hong Kong (Smart Departure) which provides greater travel convenience for visitors. The service employs facial recognition technology for identity verification, which allows eligible visitors holding electronic travel documents to perform self-service departure clearance through Smart Departure e-Channels without prior enrolment.

Hong Kong residents who require assistance while travelling outside Hong Kong may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the ImmD at (852) 1868.

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## [CE meets Secretary-General of Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf \(with photo\)](#)

â€‹The Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, met with the visiting Secretary-General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), Mr Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, at Government House today (April 25). Also present at the meeting were the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Algernon Yau, and the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, Ms Carol Yip.

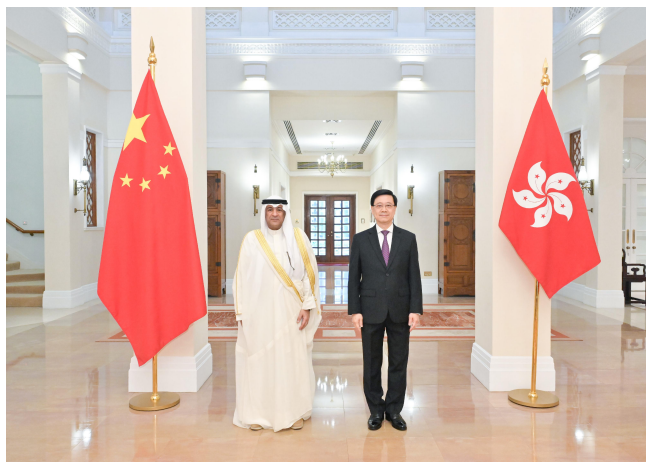
Mr Lee welcomed Mr Albudaiwi's visit to Hong Kong with his delegation. Mr Lee said he is pleased to meet with Mr Albudaiwi in Hong Kong again since they last met during his visit to Saudi Arabia in February last year to exchange views on further strengthening co-operation between Hong Kong and GCC member states in such areas as trade, investment, finance and technology.

Noting that GCC member states are Hong Kong's valued trading and investment partners, Mr Lee said that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has actively forged close ties with GCC member states in order to promote exchanges on various aspects. As part of these efforts, the HKSAR Government held the eighth Belt and Road Summit with the addition of the Middle East Forum last September to focus on the new developments and opportunities arising from the Middle East markets under the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, while the Asian Financial Forum held in January this year was well received with many political and business

leaders of GCC member states. In addition, the principal officials of the HKSAR Government have visited a number of GCC member countries to learn more about the latest developments of the Arab States of the Gulf and introduce Hong Kong's development opportunities to local political, business and professional sector leaders. Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government is planning to establish an Economic and Trade Office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, with a view to continuously enhancing the economic and trade relations with GCC member states.

Mr Lee welcomed enterprises and investors of the GCC member states to capitalise on Hong Kong's distinctive advantages under the "one country, two systems" principle, as a strategic location on the doorstep of Mainland China, as well as its world-class financial infrastructure and rich pool of professionals, to tap into the vast opportunities offered by the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development.

The GCC consists of six member states, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.



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## Over 6 000 outstanding students awarded government scholarships in the 2023/24 academic year

The Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, today (April 25) presented certificates to awardees under the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund (GSF) and the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund (SPEF) for the 2023/24 academic year at the GSF and SPEF Joint Scholarship Presentation Ceremony 2024.

Over 6 000 meritorious post-secondary students received scholarships and awards, amounting to about \$180 million in total. Both the GSF and the SPEF

also give recognition to meritorious post-secondary students with special educational needs (SEN) through the Endeavour Merit Award and the Endeavour Scholarship. This year, a total of around 580 SEN students were given the awards/scholarships.

Dr Choi said that the generous scholarship and award schemes not only highlight the Government's commitment to, and efforts in, nurturing talent, but also play an active role in developing Hong Kong as an international hub for post-secondary education.

The GSF was established in 2008 to attract outstanding local students to advance their studies at home, and meritorious non-local students to pursue higher education opportunities in Hong Kong. There are five types of scholarships and awards under the GSF, namely Scholarships for Outstanding Performance, Targeted Scholarship, Talent Development Scholarship, Reaching Out Award and Endeavour Merit Award. Scholarships and awards are offered to students studying full-time publicly funded sub-degree, undergraduate-level and above programmes. In the 2023/24 academic year, over 1 900 students received the scholarships/awards, including over 1 200 local students and about 700 non-local students. In terms of levels of study, about 1 300 students were at an undergraduate level and above, while about 600 students were at the sub-degree level.

In addition, the Belt and Road (B&R) Scholarship was introduced under the Targeted Scholarship Scheme to encourage students from B&R countries/regions to pursue studies in Hong Kong. In the 2023/24 academic year, 100 students from 21 B&R countries/regions have been awarded this scholarship for the first time.

The Self-financing Post-secondary Scholarship Scheme (SPSS) was established under the SPEF in 2011 to promote the quality and sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary sector. There are five types of scholarships and awards under the scheme, namely Outstanding Performance Scholarship, Best Progress Award, Talent Development Scholarship, Reaching Out Award and Endeavour Scholarship. These scholarships and awards are offered to students pursuing full-time locally accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes. In the 2023/24 academic year, the SPEF offered scholarships and awards to about 3 800 local and about 300 non-local students. In terms of levels of study, about 2 300 of them pursued undergraduate studies while about 1 800 students were at the sub-degree level.

A list of participating institutions is at Annex I. A broad distribution of the scholarship recipients is set out at Annex II. Details of the scholarships and awards under the GSF are available at the Education Bureau's website

([www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/postsecondary/local-higher-edu/publicly-funded-programmes/scholarship.html](http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/postsecondary/local-higher-edu/publicly-funded-programmes/scholarship.html)). Those under the SPSS as well as the SPEF are available at the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education's website ([www.cspe.edu.hk/en/index.html](http://www.cspe.edu.hk/en/index.html)).

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# External merchandise trade statistics for March 2024

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (April 25) the external merchandise trade statistics for March 2024. In March 2024, the values of Hong Kong's total exports and imports of goods both recorded year-on-year increases, at 4.7% and 5.3% respectively.

In March 2024, the value of total exports of goods increased by 4.7% over a year earlier to \$384.5 billion, after a year-on-year decrease by 0.8% in February 2024. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 5.3% over a year earlier to \$429.5 billion in March 2024, after a year-on-year decrease by 1.8% in February 2024. A visible trade deficit of \$45.0 billion, equivalent to 10.5% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in March 2024.

For the first quarter of 2024 as a whole, the value of total exports of goods increased by 11.9% over the same period in 2023. Concurrently, the value of imports of goods increased by 8.0%. A visible trade deficit of \$83.6 billion, equivalent to 7.3% of the value of imports of goods, was recorded in the first quarter of 2024.

Comparing the first quarter of 2024 with the preceding quarter on a seasonally adjusted basis, the value of total exports of goods increased by 5.7%. Meanwhile, the value of imports of goods increased by 3.1%.

## Analysis by country/territory

Comparing March 2024 with March 2023, total exports to Asia as a whole grew by 8.1%. In this region, increases were registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Vietnam (+41.6%), Thailand (+20.6%), Malaysia (+18.6%) and the mainland of China (the Mainland) (+12.1%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of total exports to Taiwan (-22.3%) and India (-17.9%).

Apart from destinations in Asia, decreases were registered in the values of total exports to most major destinations in other regions, in particular the United Kingdom (-31.5%), Germany (-15.5%) and the USA (-5.4%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases were registered in the values of imports from most major suppliers, in particular Korea (+67.5%), Vietnam (+53.0%), Thailand (+25.2%), Singapore (+13.6%) and the Mainland (+4.1%). On the other hand, decreases were recorded in the values of imports from India (-14.6%) and Taiwan (-5.9%).

For the first quarter of 2024 as a whole, year-on-year increases were

registered in the values of total exports to some major destinations, in particular Thailand (+38.8%), the United Arab Emirates (+20.8%), the Mainland (+20.2%), Vietnam (+17.7%) and India (+12.9%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of total exports to the Netherlands (-27.8%).

Over the same period of comparison, year-on-year increases were registered in the values of imports from some major suppliers, in particular Korea (+58.4%), Vietnam (+37.9%), Thailand (+19.6%), Singapore (+15.3%), the USA (+13.9%) and the Mainland (+9.8%). On the other hand, a decrease was recorded in the value of imports from India (-11.6%).

#### Analysis by major commodity

Comparing March 2024 with March 2023, 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 \$8.7 billion or +4.8%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$5.7 billion or +14.2%).

Over the same period of comparison, 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 \$10.6 billion or +5.8%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$7.5 billion or +18.3%).

For the first quarter of 2024 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 \$60.9 billion or +13.7%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$19.5 billion or +16.9%).

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 \$44.3 billion or +9.9%) and "telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment" (by \$16.6 billion or +14.2%).

#### Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the value of merchandise exports continued to grow in March 2024 over a year earlier. Exports to the Mainland rose further, while those to the United States and the European Union fell. Those to other major Asian markets showed mixed performance.

Looking ahead, geopolitical tensions and a longer period of tight financial conditions will continue to affect Hong Kong's export performance, though the slightly better-than-expected external demand may provide some



support. The Government will monitor the situation closely.

#### Further information

Table 1 presents the analysis of external merchandise trade statistics for March 2024. Table 2 presents the original monthly trade statistics from January 2021 to March 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 March 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 March 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 March 2024 will be released in mid-May 2024.

The March 2024 issue of "Hong Kong External Merchandise Trade" contains detailed analysis on the performance of Hong Kong's external merchandise trade in March 2024 and will be available in early May 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](http://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).