

Correctional officers intercept smuggling of suspected dangerous drugs into Tai Lam Centre for Women

â€‹ Correctional officers at Tai Lam Centre for Women today (July 24) intercepted a female remand person in custody smuggling suspected dangerous drugs into the centre by concealing them inside her body.

The 37-year-old person in custody was remanded in the institution for the offence of trafficking in a dangerous drug on July 20. After undergoing X-ray body scanning, she was suspected to have swallowed suspected dangerous drugs before admission. She was therefore separated and put under close monitoring.

At 2.25pm today, she discharged one pack of a suspected dangerous drug with a weight of about 19 grams wrapped in plastic. The case has been reported to the Police for follow-up.

A spokesperson for the Correctional Services Department said, "The department takes every measure to stop the introduction of dangerous drugs or unauthorised articles into correctional institutions in order to maintain good order and discipline and a drug-free environment for all persons in custody."

Grant approved for cyclone victims in Odisha, India

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has accepted the advice of the Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee and approved from the Disaster Relief Fund a grant of \$4.477 million to Habitat for Humanity Hong Kong to provide relief for cyclone victims in Odisha, India.

Announcing the grant today (July 24), a spokesman for the Government said that the cyclone had affected more than 15 million people and caused severe damages to houses and public facilities in Odisha, India. The grant will be used to provide household and hygiene items as well as temporary shelter kits to benefit around 25 000 cyclone victims. The Committee hoped the grant would facilitate the provision of timely relief to the victims and help restore them to their normal living. The grant, together with those approved earlier for this cyclone in Odisha, India, will take the accumulative value of grants and number of beneficiaries to \$16.983 million

and 101 150 respectively. As the targeted localities of relief agencies are different, there will be no overlapping of resources.

"To ensure that the money is used for the designated purposes, Habitat for Humanity Hong Kong will be asked to submit an evaluation report and an audited account on the use of the grant after the relief project has been completed," the spokesman said.

Opening remarks by SCMA at media session on EAC's report on REO's loss of Register of Electors (with video)

Following are the opening remarks made by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, at a media session today (July 24) at the Central Government Offices on the Electoral Affairs Commission's (EAC) independent investigation report on the Registration and Electoral Office's (REO) loss of a Register of Electors:

The HKSAR Government takes the loss of a Register of Electors relating to the 2016 Legislative Council (LegCo) General Election by the REO very seriously. After the incident, we immediately instructed the REO to undertake a series of follow-up actions, and provided the EAC with independent administrative support to conduct a full investigation so as to identify the problems and deficiencies in the electoral arrangements and REO's management, and make recommendations for improvement. The EAC just held a press conference this afternoon to release the report. I would like to say a few words on the Government's follow-up actions.

Public elections in Hong Kong have always been conducted in an open, fair and honest manner. This important principle should be upheld at all times. The HKSAR Government considers the loss of the Register unacceptable, and we thank the EAC for conducting a comprehensive, objective and impartial investigation and putting forth a series of improvement measures. We fully accept the EAC's recommendations, and have instructed the REO to implement the improvement measures as a matter of priority to avoid similar incidents from happening again.

The EAC learnt that the incident was related to the handling of electoral materials after the completion of the counting of votes. It has identified the REO's shortcomings in various aspects and proposed over 20 improvement measures in six major areas. Most of the recommendations on improving the packaging, transportation, collection and handling of materials, as well as strengthening staff training and internal communication

could be implemented before the District Council Ordinary Election to be held in November this year.

We will support the REO in launching the improvement measures in a number of aspects:

(1) The REO will proactively introduce technologies in public elections, such as using IT in the process of handling and storing electoral materials to make recording and tracking more effective.

(2) On storage and accommodation, we have requested the Government Property Agency (GPA) to provide sufficient storage space to meet the REO's demand in the upcoming elections, and in the longer term, to house the REO's store facilities under one roof for better store management of electoral materials. We have also invited the GPA to identify one single office accommodation for the REO.

(3) Also, we will work with the relevant policy bureaux to review the organisational structure and manpower requirements of the REO so that it will have the required manpower and resources to implement the EAC's proposals.

After it was confirmed that the Register of Electors was lost in early April, the former Chief Electoral Officer reported to me that his subordinates had never reported the incident to him. He also made a public statement stating the same. However, the investigation results revealed that his statement made at that time did not match with the facts. The former Chief Electoral Officer has been formally transferred out of the department. On whether individual REO staff should be held responsible for the incident, this will be handled by the Civil Service Bureau in accordance with the established disciplinary procedures.

I feel regretful and am disappointed about the incident. Once again I extend my apology to members of the public. I trust that the REO has learnt from the incident and will implement the improvement measures fully to forestall similar incidents from happening again. I and my colleagues in the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau will provide all the necessary assistance and support to the REO.

**Immigration Department smashes
syndicate using false instruments to
apply for foreign domestic helper**

working visas

The licensee of an employment agency, who had conspired to use false instruments to apply for foreign domestic helper (FDH) working visas, has pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to defraud and using copies of false instruments. She was sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment today (July 24) at the District Court. Five Filipinos involved in the case had been convicted earlier for the offence of making false representation to an immigration officer and breach of condition of stay at the Magistrates' Courts.

The mastermind was a 55-year-old Hong Kong resident who was the licensee of the employment agency. Since December 2017, the Immigration Department had detected several suspicious pay-television service bills submitted for foreign domestic helper visa applications through the employment agency. After months of in-depth investigation and intelligence analysis, a syndicate was identified as having arranged Filipinos to work in Hong Kong illegally through the use of false FDH contracts. In March 2018, the Immigration Department triggered the enforcement action. Fourteen persons, including the mastermind, four other Hong Kong residents and nine Filipinos who had applied for the FDH visas using false contracts, were apprehended. In addition, two computers and a considerable number of false instruments were seized, including originals and copies of forged bank statements and pay-television service bills.

During the investigation, investigators discovered that the mastermind made use of unlawfully obtained Hong Kong identity card copies and false salary and residential proof, such as forged bank statements, electricity and gas bills as well as telecommunications service and pay-television service bills to apply for FDH working visas.

After an investigation, the mastermind was prosecuted. She was sentenced to 24 months' imprisonment for the offences of six counts of conspiracy to defraud and five counts of using copies of false instruments. Regarding the bogus FDHs arrested, five were prosecuted and convicted of making false representation to an immigration officer and breach of condition of stay at the Magistrates' Courts earlier, and have already been sentenced with the highest sentence of four months' imprisonment.

An investigation of the other suspects is continuing.

"It is an offence to make, possess or use false instruments. Upon conviction, offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment. In addition, it is an offence to make false representation to an immigration officer. Offenders are liable to prosecution and to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. Furthermore, anyone who commits the offence of conspiracy to defraud is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty is imprisonment for 14 years," an Immigration Department spokesman said.

The spokesman also stressed that FDHs should only take up employment as

a domestic helper as approved by the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for two years. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution.

Interim analytical results on suspected counterfeit vaccines announced

The Department of Health (DH) today (July 24) announced the interim analytical results on the suspected counterfeit vaccines seized during joint operations earlier this month. So far, the test results revealed that no hazardous impurities were detected in the samples.

â€‹ The DH and Hong Kong Customs earlier announced that joint operations were conducted at two medical centres on July 10 and July 12 respectively during which suspected counterfeit vaccines were seized in both premises. Samples of the seized products were sent to the Government Laboratory and accredited laboratories for analysis to identify the nature of the seizures and whether they contain hazardous ingredients.

Most of the results, including the tests for certain chemical and metallic impurities, particulate matters, and certain chemical markers, were available. So far, no hazardous impurities or particulate matters were detected. In addition, the results revealed that the samples did not contain the ingredients of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The test results further revealed that samples seized from a medical centre in Kwun Tong contained sodium and chloride, which are commonly found in saline solution.

The results of the sterility test on the samples are still pending and expected to be available in mid-August. The results will be announced in due course.

Investigations by the DH and Customs are ongoing.

The DH urged members of the public who have felt unwell after receiving HPV vaccines to seek advice from healthcare professionals. Members of the public who have doubts on whether they should vaccinate or receive booster vaccines are advised to consult healthcare professionals. In addition, registered healthcare professionals should only procure registered pharmaceutical products from licensed wholesale dealers.