

SED to visit Zhuhai

The Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, will pay a duty visit to Zhuhai tomorrow (January 22) to look into the participation of Hong Kong's universities in higher education development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC), founded in Zhuhai in 2005, is the first university jointly established by the higher education sectors of the Mainland and Hong Kong. With the opening of its new campus and the establishment of its graduate school in 2017, the institution has entered a new stage.

During his visit to UIC, Mr Yeung will tour some of its facilities, including the studios of the Division of Culture and Creativity, the laboratory of the Division of Business and Management, the Food Safety Testing Centre and the Whole Person Education Experiential Learning Base. He will also attend a discussion session and other gatherings for exchanges with the management, teaching staff, students and alumni of the institution.

Mr Yeung will return to Hong Kong in the evening on the same day.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, January 21, 2019 is 103.9 (down 0.1 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, January 19, 2019 was 104 (up 0.3 against last Friday's index).

“Be a Government Official for a Day” programme 2019 – Heads of Departments edition opens for application

The following is issued on behalf of the Commission on Poverty:

The Commission on Poverty today (January 21) invited applications for

the "Be a Government Official for a Day" programme 2019 – Heads of Departments edition under the "Life Buddies" Mentoring Scheme.

The inaugural programme last year received an enthusiastic and positive response. The Chief Executive announced in the 2018 Policy Address that the scale of the programme would be expanded this year to include the Chief Executive and more senior officials to benefit more students.

In light of the expanded scale, the programme will be held in two phases. Officials participating in this phase will include Under Secretaries, Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Departments.

The programme, to be held in April, will offer the opportunity for selected students to shadow a senior government official on the job for a day to gain hands-on experience of the official's work and a better understanding of the Government's operation. It also aims at providing officials with an opportunity to share with students their work experience while also learning about the students' insights on various issues and their life goals and future plans. It is also hoped the job-shadowing process will help inspire students to develop positive values and multi-perspective thinking as well as strive to realise their potential and seize opportunities for upward mobility.

"The inaugural programme held last year was a tremendous success and it fully reflected the commitment of the current-term Government to enhancing connections with young people. My 'job shadows' and I were able to openly exchange views, share our life experiences and understand each other's thoughts through our interaction. The expanded programme will provide additional opportunities for senior government officials to directly interact with senior secondary students. I encourage students to seize this invaluable opportunity by applying for this inspiring programme," the Chief Secretary for Administration and Chairperson of the Commission on Poverty, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung said.

An experienced non-governmental organisation has also been engaged to arrange orientation, debriefing and sharing sessions for the selected students to consolidate their takeaways from the programme.

Application for the programme is open to all local Secondary Four and Five students in the 2018/19 academic year and priority will be given to students studying the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education curriculum. Application forms can be downloaded from www.lifebuddies.hk. Applicants should complete the form, together with the school recommendation, and send it to lifebuddies@csso.gov.hk by email on or before February 22, 2019 (Friday).

On the other hand, the Chief Executive and Principal Officials edition of the programme will be held in this year's summer holiday and application details will be announced in late April.

The "Life Buddies" Mentoring Scheme was launched by the Commission of Poverty in October 2015. It aims at promoting upward mobility of youths from

disadvantaged background through the school-based mentoring and Job Tasting programme. To date, the scheme has enlisted the support of over 110 government departments, corporations and organisations and has benefited over 4 300 students. The "Be a Government Official for a Day" programme was launched under "Life Buddies" in 2018 to further broaden students' horizons. Information about "Life Buddies" is available on its website (www.lifebuddies.hk/en) and social network page (www.facebook.com/lifebuddieshk).

Invest Hong Kong assists record number of overseas and Mainland companies to set up or expand in Hong Kong

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) today (January 21) announced that the Department had assisted 436 overseas and Mainland companies to set up or expand in Hong Kong in 2018.

This number represents an all-time high and a year-on-year increase of 8.5 per cent. The number of jobs thereby created (5 268) also rose by 3.3 per cent on the year before.

InvestHK's Director-General of Investment Promotion, Stephen Phillips, said he was delighted to see the continued increase in the numbers in 2018.

"2018 was another record year for InvestHK in terms of the number of companies assisted and the number of jobs created. Hong Kong continues to attract overseas and Mainland investors because of its core advantages and emerging business opportunities, especially in light of the Belt and Road initiative and the latest developments in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay area," Mr Phillips said.

"Our targets in 2019 include companies ranging from entrepreneur-led ventures to multinationals that plan to set up or expand in the city. Special focus is also being put on attracting innovation and technology companies in line with the Government's policy objectives," he added.

2018 Annual Results: Highlights

The 436 companies came from 43 economies. Mainland China continued to provide the most with a total of 101 companies, followed by the US (63), the UK (43), France (26) and Australia and Singapore (both 20).

InvestHK assisted companies from a broad range of sectors. The top sector was innovation and technology (99 companies), followed by tourism and

hospitality (61) and transport and industrial (59).

The 436 companies together created 5 268 new jobs in their first year of establishment or expansion, representing a 3.3 per cent increase compared with 2017.

About InvestHK

InvestHK is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government responsible for attracting foreign direct investment and supporting overseas and Mainland businesses to set up or expand in Hong Kong. It provides free advice and customised services for overseas and Mainland companies. For more information, please visit www.investhk.gov.hk.

Four illegal workers jailed

Four illegal workers comprising one Nepali and three Vietnamese were jailed by Shatin and Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on January 18 and 19 respectively.

During operation "Twilight" on January 15, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a restaurant in Yuen Long. A male Nepali illegal worker, aged 35, was arrested. When intercepted, he was working as a dish-washing worker. Upon identity checking, he produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant. An employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

In addition, during an anti-illegal worker operation conducted on January 16, ImmD investigators raided a restaurant in Fanling. A female Vietnamese illegal worker and two male Vietnamese illegal workers, aged 31 to 57, were arrested. When intercepted, they were working as dish-washing workers.

The four illegal workers were charged at Shatin and Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on January 18 and 19 respectively with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. They pleaded guilty to the charges and were sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any

business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase, and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.