

Fifteen immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including an operation codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Labour Department codenamed "Champion" from September 10 to 13. A total of 11 illegal workers and four suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 25 target locations including a billiard room, car parks, a commercial building, an industrial building, massage parlours, restaurants, shops and a warehouse. Five illegal workers and an employer were arrested. The illegal workers comprised two men and three women, aged 22 to 41. Meanwhile, a woman, aged 51, was suspected of employing the illegal workers.

In addition, during operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 59 target locations in Kowloon East districts and Mong Kok including a beauty centre, commercial buildings, guesthouse, industrial flats, a nightclub, a residential flat, restaurants and shops. Four illegal workers and two employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised three men and a woman, aged 36 to 51. Among them, a woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. Meanwhile, a man and a woman, aged 46 and 57, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

Furthermore, during a joint operation between the ImmD and another law enforcement agency, enforcement officers raided a frozen meat company in Tuen Mun. Two illegal workers and an employer were arrested. The illegal workers comprised two men, aged 36 and 66. Among them, a man was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits him from taking any employment. Meanwhile, a man, aged 51, was suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, visitors are not allowed to take employment in Hong Kong, whether paid or unpaid, without the permission of the Director of Immigration. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to two years' imprisonment. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and penalties," an ImmD spokesman said.

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 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.

[LegCo delegation visits Scottish Parliament \(with photos\)](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

The delegation of the Legislative Council proceeded to the visit programme in Edinburgh, the United Kingdom (UK), yesterday (September 13, Edinburgh time).

Upon arrival at Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, the delegation visited the Scottish Parliament to meet with its Parliamentary Business Team in the afternoon. They received a briefing from the Senior Assistant Clerk, Ms Catherine Fergusson, on the parliamentary procedure and the operation of Chamber business of the Scottish Parliament.

The delegation also met with the International Relations Officer of the

International Relations Office of the Scottish Parliament, Mr Gary Cocker, to learn about the history of the Scottish Parliament and the implementation of devolution in Scotland.

The delegation then met with the Clerk to the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee of the Scottish Parliament, Dr Stephen Herbert, to gain a better understanding of the implications of the UK's exit from the European Union for Scotland. Delegation members were also briefed on the development of creative industries in Scotland.

Meanwhile, the delegation met with the Shadow Cabinet Secretary of Economy, Jobs and Fair Work and member of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, Mr Dean Lockhart. Delegation members were also arranged to observe the proceedings of a meeting of the Scottish Parliament.

On the final day of the parliamentary visit today (September 14, Edinburgh time), the delegation will meet with the officials of the Scottish Government, as well as the Scotland Office of the UK Government respectively.



SHA meets with Deputy Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism of

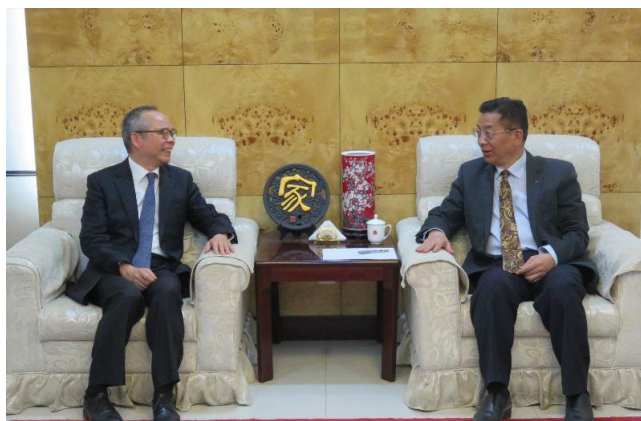
Kyrgyzstan (with photos)

The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, today (September 14) met with the Deputy Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism of Kyrgyzstan, Mrs Ainura Temirbekova, in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, to discuss ways to enhance cultural co-operation between the two places.

Mr Lau said that Kyrgyzstan is recognised as an important country under the Belt and Road Initiative, and that it participated in the 10th Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum for the first time last year. Kyrgyzstan and the Hong Kong Museum of History also collaborated for the large-scale exhibition "Miles upon Miles: World Heritage along the Silk Road" in Hong Kong. Mr Lau said he looked forward to strengthening cultural bonds between the two places.

In the afternoon, Mr Lau met with the Director of the State Agency for Youth Affairs, Physical Culture and Sport under the Government of the Kyrgyzstan, Mr Amankulov Kanat, to exchange views on the strategies and measures to promote sports development.

During his visit to Bishkek, Mr Lau visited cultural and sports facilities, and also called on the Ambassador of China to Kyrgyzstan, Mr Xiao Qinghua. Mr Lau will leave for Almaty, Kazakhstan tonight.



Suspected MERS cases reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 14) reported three suspected cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places of visit. The cases are detailed below:

Sex	Male	Female	Female
Age	44	66	7
Affected areas involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Camel ride	Visit to a local healthcare facility	Camel ride
Hospital	Ruttonjee Hospital	Queen Elizabeth Hospital	Tseung Kwan O Hospital
Condition	Stable	Stable	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative	Negative	Negative

Separately, the CHP today reported that the suspected MERS case pending results yesterday (September 13), upon preliminary testing, tested negative for MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV).

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS-CoV," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed fever or lower respiratory symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

Hong Kong to implement use of automated clearance services on mutual basis with Thailand

The Immigration Department (ImmD) today (September 14) announced that following similar arrangements it has with Australia, Korea, Germany and Singapore, Hong Kong will implement the mutual use of automated clearance services with Thailand. With effect from tomorrow (September 15), holders of a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) electronic passport can use the automated immigration clearance service in Thailand without prior enrolment and free of charge, while holders of a Thai passport can enrol for the e-Channel service in Hong Kong free of charge.

An ImmD spokesperson said the implementation of the new arrangement would provide greater travel convenience for Hong Kong residents and Thai visitors, and would enhance trade, business and tourism links between the two places.

The spokesperson added that holders of an HKSAR electronic passport with at least six months' validity (from the date of arrival in Thailand) who are at least 120 centimetres in height, have no adverse records in Thailand and intend to stay in Thailand as visitors for not more than 30 days may use the automatic channels at Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport and Don Mueang International Airport for arrival and departure clearance.

An eligible HKSAR passport holder may proceed to an automatic channel in an arrival or departure hall of the above-mentioned airports, place the bio-data page of his or her HKSAR electronic passport on the document reader and scan the barcode of his or her boarding pass. Upon entering the automatic channel, he or she may have a photo taken as per instructions and place his or her left or right index finger on the fingerprint scanner for identity verification. Upon completion, he or she may leave the automatic channel and present his or her HKSAR electronic passport to an immigration officer of Thailand for stamping.

Meanwhile, holders of a Thai passport who are aged 11 or above, have made at least one visit to the HKSAR in the past 12 months prior to enrolment and have no adverse records in Hong Kong can take their Thai passports with a validity period of at least six months to an e-Channel Enrolment Office at the Immigration Headquarters, Hong Kong International Airport or the Macau Ferry Terminal for e-Channel service enrolment. The enrolment procedures include submission of an enrolment form, collection of fingerprints and photo-taking. Applicants aged under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or a guardian and the parent or guardian must produce his or her valid travel document. Enrolment is on a voluntary basis and free of charge. For detailed information, please visit the website of the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk.