

Man sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment for illegally importing and causing cruelty to endangered turtles (with photos)

A 38-year-old Filipino man who smuggled 63 endangered turtles into Hong Kong was convicted and sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment today (March 28) for violating the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance (Cap. 586) and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169).

The male traveller transiting to the Philippines arrived at Hong Kong International Airport from Malaysia on March 31 last year. During transit, Customs found 63 live suspected scheduled endangered turtles in his three pieces of check-in baggage. Officers of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) were summoned to the scene and found that all the turtles had been wrapped with a layer of cloth and then a layer of transparent plastic wrap, or wrapped directly with a transparent plastic wrap, rendering them unable to freely stretch and move their limbs. There was also no food, water or moisturising materials in the baggage.

Upon inspection, the turtles were identified as 49 radiated tortoises (*Astrochelys radiata*) and 14 batagurs (*Batagur baska*), which are endangered species listed in Appendix I and Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, respectively, and regulated locally under the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance. Both species are listed as Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

The man was charged with illegal import of an Appendix I species, illegal import of an Appendix II species and cruelty to animals. He was convicted at the District Court and was sentenced to 30 months behind bars today.

According to the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance, any person importing, exporting or possessing specimens of endangered species not in accordance with the Ordinance commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for 10 years upon conviction with the specimens forfeited.

Also, according to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance, any person by unreasonably doing or omitting to do any act, causes any unnecessary suffering to any animal commits an offence and will be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for three years upon conviction.

A spokesman for the AFCD stressed, "The Government is committed to protecting endangered species and safeguarding animal welfare. The AFCD will remain vigilant and continue to monitor and combat illegal activities involving endangered species and animal cruelty."

Members of the public may call 1823 to report any suspected irregularities to the AFCD and visit the AFCD website: www.cites.hk regarding the control of endangered species in Hong Kong.



[14 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations \(with photo\)](#)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight", and a joint operation with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion", for four consecutive days from March 24 to yesterday (March 27). A total of seven suspected illegal workers, four suspected employers and three overstayers were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 24 target locations including commercial buildings, retail stores, residential buildings, and restaurants, and arrested six suspected illegal workers. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised two men and four women, aged 50 to 66. Among them, one woman was a holder of recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. In addition, one man and two women were suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Two men and one woman, aged 28 to 53, were suspected of employing the illegal workers. One male and two females, aged 42 to 59, who were overstayers, were also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 19 target locations in Eastern district. One suspected illegal worker and one suspected

employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal worker was a man, aged 24. The 26-year-old man, who was suspected of employing the illegal worker, was also arrested.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her 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. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 years' imprisonment."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is 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. As stipulated in section 20(1)(a) of the Immigration Ordinance, the Chief Executive may make a deportation order against an immigrant, prohibiting the immigrant from being in Hong Kong at any time thereafter if the immigrant has been found guilty in Hong Kong of an offence punishable by imprisonment for not less than two years."

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. 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. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman reminded all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute

enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an 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 ImmD officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats 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 intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



[LegCo Members meet with members of Shatin and Southern District Councils \(with photos\)](#)

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

Legislative Council (LegCo) Members met with Shatin District Council (DC) and Southern DC members at the LegCo Complex today (March 28). They held in-depth discussions and exchanged views on issues related to community development and people's concern.

During the meeting with Shatin DC, LegCo Members discussed and exchanged views with DC members on various issues, including minimization of feral

pigeon nuisance to Shatin residents, such as the environmental hygiene problems caused by pigeon droppings; revitalization works of Tai Wai Nullah, its flood discharge capacity, water quality, hygiene and greening; as well as enhancement and modification works of Shatin Park and surrounding facilities, for example studying the feasibility of providing pedal-driven boat facilities, so as to tie in with the concept of "tourism is everywhere" in Hong Kong.

The meeting was convened by Ms Elizabeth Quat. A total of 23 Members attended the meeting including Mr Tommy Cheung, Dr Starry Lee, Mr Chan Hak-kan, Mr Steven Ho, Mr Martin Liao, Dr Lo Wai-kwok, Mr Holden Chow, Ms Yung Hoi-yan, Mr Luk Chung-hung, Ms Doreen Kong Yuk-foon, Mr Stanley Li, Mr Dominic Lee, Mr Lee Chun-keung, Ms Lam So-wai, Ms Nixie Lam, Ms Chan Yuet-ming, Mr Chan Siu-hung, Ms Chan Hoi-yan, Mr Benson Luk, Mr Lai Tung-kwok, Ms Carmen Kan and Professor Chan Wing-kwong.

During the meeting with Southern DC, LegCo Members discussed and exchanged views with DC members on various issues, including expediting the commencement of South Island Line (West) construction project; the progress of public housing developments in Pok Fu Lam South and the redevelopment of Wah Fu Estate, including the relevant timetables and rehousing arrangements for tenants; as well as the progress of various projects to improve the environment of the Southern District, the latest development of the Round-the-Island Trail, as well as the planning of the expansion of the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter under the Invigorating Island South initiative.

The meeting was convened by Mr Jeffrey Lam Kin-fung. A total of 20 Members attended the meeting including Dr Starry Lee, Mr Chan Kin-por, Mrs Regina Ip, Mr Kwok Wai-keung, Dr Lo Wai-kwok, Mr Jimmy Ng, Mr Shiu Ka-fai, Dr Hoey Simon Lee, Mr Lee Chun-keung, Mr Lam Chun-sing, Ms Nixie Lam, Mr Yiu Pak-leung, Ms Chan Yuet-ming, Ms Judy Chan, Mr Chan Hok-fung, Mr Benson Luk Hon-man, Mr Lai Tung-kwok, Mr Kenneth Fok Kai-kong and Professor William Wong.





MD announcement (2)

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Marine Department today (March 28) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported.

Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the

SFST's speech at Greater Bay Area Learning Workshop of Finance Career Trainee Program (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, at the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Learning Workshop of the Finance Career Trainee Program today (March 28):

Ms Rose Kay (Chief Operating Officer, Hong Kong and Head of Chief Executive Officer Office, Hong Kong and Greater China and North Asia, Standard Chartered Bank), Ms Florence Wong (Head of Human Resources, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Co-head of Human Resources, GBA, Standard Chartered Bank), Ms Brenda Hou (Senior Head, Asia Pacific, Global Partnership & Client Solutions, CFA (Chartered Financial Analyst) Institute), Mr Ben Yi (Director and Vice President, GBA Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Foundation), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to join you today at the GBA Learning Workshop of the Finance Career Trainee Program co-organised by Standard Chartered Bank, CFA Institute, and KPMG China. Let me begin by commending the organisers for their unwavering dedication to nurturing our next generation of financial leaders.

It is very exciting to learn that nearly 2 500 students from 400 universities worldwide have applied to this programme since its inception in September 2023, reflecting its global reach and credibility. It has not only created valuable learning opportunities for students but also bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Even more importantly, this finance career trainee programme rightly dedicates its focus to the Greater Bay Area. Indeed, the GBA represents an extraordinary opportunity for ambitious young professionals like those here today. As one of the world's most dynamic and rapidly evolving economic regions, the GBA serves as a hub of innovation, presenting endless possibilities in financial services, technology, and cross-border collaboration.

In recent years, financial co-operation in the GBA has grown significantly. For example, the Cross-Boundary Wealth Management Connect allows eligible residents in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau to invest in wealth management products through a closed-loop capital channel established between banks and brokers. Meanwhile, the Government and the financial

industry have actively strengthened financial infrastructure, with cross-border mobile payments becoming increasingly common across the GBA. Another noteworthy development is the successful pilot for cross-boundary credit referencing between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, which has helped address the challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in obtaining cross-border financing.

These examples underscore how financial collaboration in the GBA is creating exciting new opportunities – not only for the financial industry but also for young professionals. For our youngsters here today, I encourage you to embrace these opportunities, contribute to these collaborative efforts, and play an active role in shaping the future of finance in this dynamic region.

As you prepare to step into the exciting and ever-changing financial industry, I would like to offer three more pieces of advice:

First, think beyond borders: The GBA's strength lies in its cross-boundary collaboration. By working across different cities, you can develop a global perspective, gain insights into diverse markets, and leverage the collective strengths of the region.

Second, stay curious and adaptable: The financial industry is evolving rapidly, driven by technological advancements and shifting economic landscapes. Staying curious, adaptable and eager to learn will be key to thriving in this dynamic environment.

Last but not least, be purpose-driven: As the next generation of leaders, please strive to make a meaningful impact. Financial services are not only about driving profitability but also about contributing to society, promoting sustainability, and improving lives.

I am confident that through this programme, you will gain the skills, insights, and networks necessary to excel in the financial industry while contributing to the continued growth of the GBA as a global financial powerhouse.

In closing, I would like to once again express my gratitude to Standard Chartered Bank, CFA Institute, and KPMG China for their remarkable vision and dedication to empowering young talent.

Thank you, and I wish you all a successful and inspiring workshop ahead.