

## 24 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photos)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Lightshadow" to combat illegal food delivery couriers from January 2 to today (February 18). A total of 14 suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected aiders and abettors were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, 14 suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected aiders and abettors were arrested by ImmD Task Force officers. The 14 arrested suspected illegal workers are non-ethnic Chinese males aged 21 to 54. Among them, 13 men were found to be holders of recognisance forms and were non-refoulement claimants, which prohibit them from taking any employment in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the 10 suspected aiders and abettors are Hong Kong residents age 17 to 41. The eight men and two women were arrested for being suspected of a conspiracy to defraud delivery platforms by selling or renting their food delivery courier accounts to the illegal workers.

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."

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."

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.



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## [Missing boy in Kwai Chung located](#)

Â Â Â Â Â A boy who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Â Â Â Â Â Ma Kin-hei, aged 14, went missing after he was last seen at Kwai Chung Interchange on February 9 morning. His family made a report to Police.

À À À À The boy was located on Tin Yan Road, Tin Shui Wai yesterday (February 17) afternoon. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

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## **Director-General of Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises visits Auckland and Sydney to promote Hong Kong's advantages (with photos)**

The Director-General of the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises (OASES), Mr Peter Yan, today (February 18) began his visit to Auckland, New Zealand, and Sydney, Australia, to promote Hong Kong's latest developments and new opportunities in the innovation and technology (I&T) industry. These include sectors of artificial intelligence and data science, life and health technology, advanced manufacturing and new energy technology, and financial technology, with the aim of attracting potential strategic enterprises to establish their presence in Hong Kong.

Upon arrival in Auckland today, Mr Yan met with various senior representatives of local I&T enterprises to gain insights into the latest local technological developments and trends, and exchange views on potential collaboration opportunities between Hong Kong and Auckland. Mr Yan also shared OASES's unique role and support functions with the business leaders, and discussed with them their intentions and plans for setting up or expanding in Hong Kong.

During the meetings, Mr Yan said, "Hong Kong is the world's freest economy, the third-largest international financial centre, and the seventh-most digitally competitive city globally. Additionally, Hong Kong is the only Asian city with five universities in the world's top 100, and features world-class research institutions, top-notch professional services and a highly skilled talent pool. On top of these unique advantages, Hong Kong also embraces the role of connecting both Mainland China and overseas countries, serving as a 'super connector' and 'super value-adder', making it the most convenient and efficient gateway for New Zealand and Australian enterprises to enter Mainland China."

Tomorrow (February 19) and February 20, Mr Yan and an OASES representative will meet with more I&T enterprises in Auckland and Sydney. They will also visit industry chambers, I&T investment and financial institutions, and professional services organisations in both places to discuss opportunities for financial and investment exchanges as well as I&T collaborations between Hong Kong and the two cities to foster interaction

between talent and industries within the I&T sector.

Through these meetings, Mr Yan aims to reinforce OASES's connections with Auckland and Sydney, and encourage more strategic enterprises to establish a presence in Hong Kong.

Mr Yan will depart for Hong Kong in the afternoon on February 20 (Sydney time).



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## [Missing man in Cheung Sha Wan located](#)

A man who went missing in Cheung Sha Wan has been located.

Lau Kok-yim, aged 92, went missing after he was last seen at a hospital on Wing Hong Street, Cheung Sha Wan on February 14 night. His family made a report to Police yesterday (February 17).

The man was located in Cheung Sha Wan this afternoon (February 18). He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

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## **Refuse transfer station user convicted of illegal disposal of construction waste**

â€A refuse transfer station user, who illegally deposited construction waste in the Sha Tin Refuse Transfer Station, was fined \$1,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (February 18) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

On July 29, 2024, the contractor of the Sha Tin Refuse Transfer Station conducted spot checks against vehicles carrying unacceptable waste (such as construction waste) in the refuse transfer station (RTS) and subsequently found that there was construction waste in the refuse carried by one of the trucks. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) officers on-site then conducted a further inspection and evidence collection, and instructed the truck driver to immediately arrange proper disposal of the construction waste concerned. Based on the evidence collected, the EPD prosecuted the driver for illegal disposal of construction waste in an RTS under the WDO.

A spokesman for the EPD stressed that under the Waste Disposal (Charges for Disposal of Construction Waste) Regulation, only Outlying Islands Transfer Facilities allow users to pay for disposing of construction waste, while disposal of construction waste at other RTSs is prohibited.

The EPD and RTS contractors will continue to step up spot checks of waste collection vehicles entering the RTS. Once any violation of regulations is found, the user will be required to arrange the removal of the construction waste, and the EPD will also investigate and prosecute the persons involved, and consider revoking the registered account for using the RTS as appropriate.