

Seventeen persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" from August 31 to yesterday (September 3). A total of 10 suspected illegal workers, six suspected employers and one overstayer were arrested.

During the operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 23 target locations including a factory, industrial buildings, premises under renovation, residential flats, restaurants, a warehouse and wet markets. The suspected illegal workers comprised two men and eight women, aged 29 to 65. 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 forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, four men and two women, aged 29 to 58, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers. Furthermore, one female overstayer, aged 48, was arrested.

"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. 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 a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

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 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 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, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.



New schedule for providing free COVID-19 testing services for Hong Kong mobile fishermen and their deckhands

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has been providing free COVID-19 testing for all Hong Kong mobile fishermen and their

deckhands on board vessels operating in Mainland waters since last month. After discussion with the trade, the AFCD today (September 4) announced that it has decided to change the schedule for providing free testing until further notice.

The deep throat saliva test sample bottles will be distributed from 9am to 12.30pm every Monday, and collected between 9am and 12.30pm every Tuesday. Distribution and collection of the sample bottles will still be conducted at two locations, namely Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market, and Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Fish Market under the Fish Marketing Organization.

A spokesman for the AFCD said, "All Hong Kong mobile fishermen and the deckhands hired on board their fishing vessels or fisheries ancillary vessels operating in Mainland waters are eligible for the services."

The spokesman reminded fishermen and deckhands who will take the tests to collect bottles and application forms in person. Hong Kong mobile fishermen should bring along their Hong Kong identity cards, Mainland Travel Permits for Hong Kong and Macao Residents and the fishing permit/ancillary vessel permit (either a copy or an electronic file is acceptable). Mainland deckhands should bring along their identity cards and deckhand permits issued by the Mainland authorities and the vessel owner's confirmation letter (if the vessel owner has not come along). Application forms and confirmation letters can be downloaded from the following website:
www.afcd.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/what_fis/what_fis.html.

Sample bottles should be returned together with completed forms, and this can be done by others.

To safeguard personal health and minimise health risks, the spokesman urged fishermen to maintain environmental hygiene at all times and remind their staff to pay attention to personal hygiene to reduce the risk of contracting the disease. Fishing vessels should be equipped with thermometers. The body temperatures of everyone on board should be taken and recorded every day. All necessary protective measures should be taken during their time on the Mainland or in Hong Kong to safeguard personal hygiene and avoid unnecessary social contact. In case of fever or any other respiratory symptoms, medical advice should be sought as soon as possible. For relevant information, please visit the COVID-19 Thematic Website:
www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html.

For enquiries, please call 2150 7095 or 2150 7099.

Special arrangements for services of

Social Welfare Department

In view of the latest developments of the epidemic situation, a spokesperson for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) today (September 4) announced the arrangements for the SWD's public services from September 7 until further notice.

While the departmental hotline service will be in operation as normal, other services such as those of the Social Security Field Units (SSFUs) and the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) will be provided on a limited scale.

The SSFUs will be open to the public on Tuesday and Friday. Relevant application forms are also provided next to the drop-in boxes of the SSFUs and can be downloaded from the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk). Completed forms can be returned to the relevant SSFUs by post, fax or email, or through the drop-in boxes of the SSFUs at any time. After receiving the applications, the SSFU staff will contact applicants for processing their applications. For enquiries, please call the SSFU staff on duty during office hours.

The IFSCs will continue to be open to the public to provide casework services with extended hours of service suspended.

Service users are advised to call the hotline on 2343 2255 for details of services provision. To reduce the risk of infection arising from gatherings of people, service users are advised to contact the staff of the service units by telephone in advance so that interviews can be scheduled as appropriate. All visitors must put on masks, have their body temperature checked and maintain social distancing.

Meanwhile, the SWD has strengthened infection controls at all service units. Staff will be reminded to follow necessary infection control measures.

The SWD will continue to monitor the situation, with a view to returning the delivery of public services to normal as far as possible, as circumstances permit.

HAB recruits for more than 2 500 time-limited jobs

In view of the severe blow to various sectors in Hong Kong brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) is creating over 2 500 time-limited jobs related to culture, arts, leisure, sports and district administration under the Anti-epidemic Fund Job Creation Scheme.

A spokesman for the HAB said today (September 4), "Over 1 000 vacancies have been filled by now. Recruitment for the remaining vacancies will commence gradually. This initiative will cost around \$354 million.

"The newly created time-limited jobs, both full-time and part-time, last for six to 12 months and cover a wide range of positions in the HAB, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Home Affairs Department (HAD), as well as related non-governmental organisations. The positions are suitable for candidates with different skills and qualifications."

In terms of culture and arts, the positions created will provide support, including marketing and administration, the development of a smart library system, management/operation duties and service provision, for public libraries and cultural venues for organisations such as the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, as well as the LCSD. The positions also provide internship opportunities for those who aim to take up a career in arts administration or stage management.

As for posts created in the field of leisure and sports, job duties will include strengthening training for athletes at the Hong Kong Sports Institute and relevant national sports associations (NSAs) of sports for persons with disabilities, enhancing the administrative support for subvented NSAs, and providing administrative and event support for the LCSD. Moreover, some other posts will be responsible for enhancing the cleaning, horticultural maintenance and management work of leisure venues.

At the same time, the HAD also plans to create jobs for performing various administrative and clerical duties.

"We will continue to conduct recruitment exercises in a timely manner in accordance with the requirements of each position. We look forward to providing time-limited job opportunities to various sectors and aim to weather the storm together with them," the spokesman said.

CS visits community testing centre at Sheung Wan Sports Centre

The Government launched the Universal Community Testing Programme (UCTP) on September 1 to provide a one-off free testing service for members of the public at 141 community testing centres. The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, accompanied by the Commissioner of the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS), Dr Constance Chan, and the Chief

Staff Officer of AMS, Mr Alex Wong, visited the community testing centre at Sheung Wan Sports Centre today (September 4) to inspect the operation of the centre and give encouragement to the staff members.

Mr Cheung was first briefed on the manpower allocation and the design of the centre. He then viewed the testing workflow.

He said he was pleased to see that the response to the UCTP has been favourable, noting that as at 11am this morning, over 917 000 persons had made appointments since August 29 when the online booking system opened while the turnout rate of the community testing centre at Sheung Wan Sports Centre is also high.

He expressed his thanks to the AMS representatives who provided services on site. To support the Government's implementation of the UCTP, the AMS arranged swab training for 200 volunteer members. Since September 1, it has been providing services at four testing centres (including that at Sheung Wan Sports Centre), where four doctors, 25 nurses and 30 members with related training work daily to collect combined nasal and throat swabs at the 35 swabbing booths of the four testing centres for testing.

He said that the support of the AMS is indispensable in the anti-epidemic work of the Government. Apart from actively participating in testing centre work, the AMS also helps in escorting persons under quarantine to the quarantine centres as well as rendering support to the Department of Health at the quarantine centres for medical services.

In addition, Mr Cheung chatted with the healthcare personnel and other staff members of the centre, expressing his appreciation for their participation and dedication, which has contributed to the smooth operation of the UCTP and the anti-epidemic work.

He stressed that the entire testing process is safe, quick and convenient, while the design and workflow of the centre had been drawn up in accordance with infection control and social distancing measures.

"After reviewing the experience of the operation of the UCTP and public demand, the Government decided to extend the programme period for four days to September 11 to enable more people to receive tests," he said.

He also appealed to members of the public to actively participate in the UCTP to protect oneself and others, saying that the more people participate in the programme, the higher the chances of identifying asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in the community for early isolation and early treatment. That will help break the invisible transmission chains in the community so that social and economic activities can resume gradually and people's daily lives, including travel and tourism, can return to normal.

For details of the UCTP, please visit the dedicated website at www.communitytest.gov.hk.