

Thirty-two immigration offenders arrested (with photos)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" yesterday (May 20). A total of 31 illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Investigation sub-division officers raided 19 massage parlours. Thirty-one illegal workers and one employer were arrested. The illegal workers comprised seven men and 24 women, aged 22 to 55. Meanwhile, one woman, aged 35, 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 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.



[Import of poultry meat and products from states of Guerrero and Tlaxcala in Mexico suspended](#)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (May 21) that in view of a notification from the the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) about outbreaks of highly pathogenic H7N3 avian influenza in the states of Guerrero and Tlaxcala in Mexico, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from these areas with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong has currently established a protocol with Mexico for import of poultry meat but not for poultry eggs. In the first three months of this year, no poultry meat from Mexico was imported into Hong Kong.

"The CFS has contacted the Mexican authorities over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate actions will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Postal services to Chicago in US return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (May 21) that, as advised by the postal administration of the United States, mail delivery services to Chicago (postcodes 400XX to 799XX) have returned to normal.