

Latest arrangements for public services of the Legal Aid Department

In view of the latest developments with COVID-19 and in response to the Government's announcement on the latest special work arrangements, the Legal Aid Department (LAD) announced today (March 23) that the LAD offices will provide basic necessary and limited civil and criminal legal aid application and litigation services between March 24 and 27.

The Information and Application Services Unit of the Kowloon Branch Office will be closed starting from tomorrow (March 24) until further notice. Opening hours of other offices are as follows:

Offices	Opening hours
Information and Application Services Unit, Headquarters	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Crime Section	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Civil Litigation Section 1	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Civil Litigation Section 2	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Costing Unit and Enforcement Unit	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday
Shroff Office	From 9.30am to 1pm; 2pm to 4.30pm Monday to Friday

For enquiries, please contact the following offices during the above office hours:

- Information and Application Services Unit, Headquarters: 2537 7717 (for civil legal aid services)
- Information and Application Services Unit, Kowloon Branch Office: 2380 0117
- Crime Section: 2867 3139
- Civil Litigation Section 1: 2867 3123
- Civil Litigation Section 2: 2594 7884
- Costing Unit and Enforcement Unit: 2867 3152

Members of the public may also contact the LAD for other enquiries through its 24-hour hotline (2537 7677), email (ladinfo@lad.gov.hk) or fax (2537 5948).

Annual Survey of Economic Activities for 2019 starts

The Census and Statistics Department announced today (March 23) the commencement of the Annual Survey of Economic Activities for the reference year of 2019. The survey aims to collect up-to-date statistical data on business performance and operating characteristics of various economic sectors for evaluating their contribution to Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product. The survey results are useful to both the Government and the private sector in formulating policies and making decisions.

About 20 000 establishments in various economic sectors are selected to participate in the survey. Questionnaires have been sent to selected establishments individually together with the notification letters. To assist the selected establishments in providing the required information, electronic templates of the questionnaires will also be available upon request.

The statistical survey is a mandatory one conducted under Part III of the Census and Statistics Ordinance (Chapter 316). According to section 13(1) of the Ordinance, any person to whom a questionnaire relating to a statistical survey is delivered shall complete the questionnaire or cause it to be completed by other persons to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, and in the manner specified in the questionnaire, and then return the questionnaire on or before the specified date. The Ordinance also stipulates that all collected information which may enable identification of individual establishments should be kept in strict confidence. Only aggregate information, which does not reveal details of individual establishments, will be released.

The Department would like to thank those establishments which had participated in previous rounds of the survey, and appeal to the management of all establishments which have been selected in the current survey round for their co-operation in the survey by returning the completed questionnaires to the Department on or before May 29, 2020.

The information to be sought in the survey mainly includes type of ownership, origin of investment, number of persons engaged, compensation of employees (including wages, salaries and other employee benefits), operating expenses, business receipts, capital expenditure and other information related to the business operation of the establishments.

If necessary, census officers of the Department may contact individual establishments to offer assistance in completing the questionnaires. These officers will each carry a Government/Enumerator Identity Card and a certificate for conducting the survey, which are available for inspection.

Enquiries regarding the survey may be directed to the Economic Surveys Section (1) (Tel: 3903 7131, fax: 2123 1429, email: econq1@censtatd.gov.hk) or Economic Surveys Section (2) (Tel: 3903 7168, fax: 2805 6105, email: econq2@censtatd.gov.hk) of the Department.

Town Planning Board Secretariat's Reception Counter maintains services for collection of submissions made under the Town Planning Ordinance

The following is issued on behalf of the Town Planning Board:

In line with the latest adjustment to public services in response to the latest situation of COVID-19 announced by the Government, and to reduce social contacts and the risk of spreading the disease in the community, starting from today (March 23), members of the public can place their submissions made under the Town Planning Ordinance, into the drop-in box located at the Town Planning Board Secretariat's reception counter at 15/F, North Point Government Offices during office hours (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday). Other counter services will be temporarily suspended until further notice. Members of the public can continue to make enquiries through the telephone hotline (2231 4810) or email (tpbpd@pland.gov.hk), and can visit the TPB's website www.info.gov.hk/tpb for statutory planning information.

Labour Department investigates fatal work accident in Kowloon Tong

The Labour Department (LD) is investigating a fatal work accident in Kowloon Tong this morning (March 23), in which a man has died.

The LD immediately deployed staff to the scene upon receiving a report

of the accident, and is now conducting an investigation to look into its cause.

Illegal worker jailed

A Vietnamese illegal worker was jailed by Fanling Magistrates' Courts on March 20.

During operation "Twilight" conducted on March 18, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a restaurant in Tuen Mun. A female Vietnamese, aged 29, was arrested while working as a dish-washing worker. An employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was also arrested and an investigation is ongoing.

The illegal worker was charged at Fanling Magistrates' Courts on March 20 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. She pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. Meanwhile, she was also charged with one count of using a forged Hong Kong identity card and was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. All sentences are to run concurrently, making a total of 15 months' imprisonment.

An ImmD 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. 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 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.