

CE and politically appointed officials donate remuneration to Community Chest

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (March 6) wrote a letter to the Community Chest of Hong Kong, attaching to it cheques worth a month of remuneration from her and all politically appointed officials (including the Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux, the Director of the Chief Executive's Office, under secretaries and political assistants) totalling 44 people as a donation for the sum of \$10,805,250 to show that the governing team are fighting the disease and riding out the difficult times with the public.

A Government spokesman said that the Government has, through the establishment of the \$30 billion Anti-epidemic Fund and the 2020-21 Budget delivered by the Financial Secretary recently, rolled out various measures to relieve the impact of the epidemic on various sectors in the community and the general public. Meanwhile, many civic-minded organisations and bodies have also responded to calls for assistance by lending a helping hand to the underprivileged proactively to help tide them over the difficult times.

"In support of fighting the epidemic together, the Community Chest set up 'The Community Chest Anti-NCP Rainbow Fund' earlier to take care of the financial needs of people and deliver care kits to grass-roots citizens. With its years of experience in helping disadvantaged people, the Community Chest will play an important role at this critical moment by allocating funds donated by various sectors to organisations that serve the community effectively so that people in need can continue to receive support," the spokesman said.

Twenty-eight persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" from March 2 to yesterday (March 5). A total of 18 suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected employers were arrested.

During the operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 65 target locations including food factories, a garbage room of a private housing estate, industrial buildings, a recycling site, residential buildings, restaurants, shops, a warehouse and wet markets. The suspected illegal workers comprised nine men and nine women, aged 25 to 60. Among them, two men

were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, three men and six women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, six men and four women, aged 45 to 69, were suspected of employing the suspected 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 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 initial screenings 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.

Gradual resumption of public services of the Office of The Ombudsman

To continue to help reduce social contacts and the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in the community, the Office of The Ombudsman will gradually resume more public services in an orderly manner. The Office today (March 6) announced the updated special work arrangements from March 9:

- The Reception Counter will be open from 10am to 5pm from Monday to Friday. Members of the public who wish to lodge complaints or make enquiries are encouraged to contact the Office through email, fax, hotline, voice message or online form. Face-to-face meetings with the Duty Officer or case officers have to be made by prior appointment.
- All visitors by prior appointment are required to wear surgical masks and take a body temperature check before entering the Office. Those with symptoms such as fever or cough will be advised to seek medical assistance and not to enter the Office.

The Office will review the situation regularly and prepare for full resumption of normal services when conditions permit.

Appointments to Board of Ocean Park Corporation announced

The Government announced today (March 6) that the Chief Executive has re-appointed Ms Loretta Fong Wan-huen and Mr Stephen Wong See-yuen to the Board of Ocean Park Corporation (OPC) for a period of two years from March 10, 2020 to March 9, 2022.

"We are grateful to Ms Fong and Mr Wong for their hard work in taking forward the development of Ocean Park. We are sure that, with the devotion and wide-ranging expertise of the Board members, the Board would continue to lead Ocean Park to serve the Hong Kong community and its visitors," a spokesman for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau said.

The OPC is a statutory body established under the Ocean Park Corporation Ordinance to manage Ocean Park as a public recreational and educational park.

Construction of footbridge at junction of Sham Mong Road and Yen Chow Street West authorised

The Chief Executive in Council has authorised the construction of a covered footbridge at the junction of Sham Mong Road and Yen Chow Street West in Sham Shui Po. The notice was gazetted today (March 6).

Details of the works are set out in the Annex.