

Twenty-nine persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" and "Rally" and joint operations with the Labour Department to combat illegal employment activities at the Lunar New Year Fairs from January 20 to yesterday (January 23). A total of 19 suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight" and "Rally", ImmD Task Force officers raided 284 target locations including construction sites, a garbage collection depot, an industrial building, a park, premises under renovation, restaurants, salons, a shopping mall and wet markets. The suspected illegal workers comprised nine men and six women, aged 26 to 74. Among them, a woman was a holder of recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. In addition, two men and four women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, five men and a woman, aged 32 to 59, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers.

In addition, during the anti-illegal worker operations at the Lunar New Year Fairs, enforcement officers raided target stalls at eight Lunar New Year Fairs in Causeway Bay, Kwai Chung, Kwun Tong, Mong Kok, San Po Kong, Sha Tin, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long. The suspected illegal workers comprised a man and three women, aged 26 to 38. Meanwhile, three men and a woman, aged 23 to 61, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers. Apart from mounting enforcement operations, ImmD officers also distributed leaflets to the stall keepers to remind them not to employ 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.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, January 24, 2020 is 106 (same as yesterday's index).

Exchange Fund Bills tender results

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Exchange Fund Bills tender results:

Tender date : January 24, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2005
Issue date : January 29, 2020
Maturity date : April 29, 2020
Amount applied : HK\$121,230 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$38,237 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.86 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.89 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 43 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.95 PCT

Tender date : January 24, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2034
Issue date : January 29, 2020
Maturity date : July 29, 2020
Amount applied : HK\$35,550 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$11,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 1.86 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 1.89 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 71 PCT
Average tender yield : 1.96 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tenders to be held in the week beginning February 3, 2020:

Tender date : February 4, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q2006
Issue date : February 5, 2020
Maturity date : May 6, 2020
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$41,861 MN

Tender date : February 4, 2020
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H2035
Issue date : February 5, 2020
Maturity date : August 5, 2020
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$11,000 MN

EPD to implement new qualifying standards for environment-friendly commercial vehicles from April 2020

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (January 24) announced that the new qualifying standards (QS) for environment-friendly commercial vehicles to be implemented for the period from April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021, inclusive are as follows:

(a) For Heavy Duty Commercial Vehicles (with a design weight of more than 3.5 tonnes):

- i. the QS for heavy duty commercial vehicles (except (a)ii) will remain unchanged as "Euro VI On-Board Diagnostics (OBD) Phase C with Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) emission at least 30 per cent less than the Euro VI limit"; and
- ii. for buses with a design weight of not more than 9 tonnes and light buses with a design weight of more than 3.5 tonnes, the current QS (Euro VI) will remain unchanged.

(b) For Light Duty Commercial Vehicles (with a design weight of not more than 3.5 tonnes):

- i. the QS for light duty commercial vehicles (except (b)ii) will remain unchanged as "Euro 6b OBD Euro 6-1 with NOx emission at least 50 per cent less than the Euro 6 limit" up to August 31, 2020, and will be tightened to "Euro 6c OBD Euro 6-2 with NOx emission at least 30 per cent less than the Euro 6 limit" from September 1, 2020; and
- ii. for taxis, the QS will remain unchanged as "Euro 6c OBD Euro 6-2 with NOx emission at least 80 per cent less than the Euro 6 limit".

An EPD spokesman said, "As all first registered light duty commercial vehicles will be required to meet the statutory emission standards of Euro 6c OBD Euro 6-2 from September 1 this year, there is a need to tighten the relevant QS for the environment-friendly vehicles such that only vehicles with outstanding emission performance outstripping the prevailing statutory requirements can enjoy the first registration tax (FRT) concessions."

To improve roadside air quality and safeguard public health, the Government has been offering tax incentives since April 1, 2008 to encourage vehicle owners to choose environment-friendly commercial vehicles with exhaust emissions that outperform the prevailing statutory emission standards. The EPD reviews the QS of environment-friendly commercial vehicle models annually in the light of vehicle technological advancement, market

availability and the prevailing statutory emission standards for first registered vehicles.

At present, the rates of FRT reduction for environment-friendly commercial vehicle classes range from 30 per cent to 100 per cent subject to vehicle-class-specific caps per vehicle.

The EPD regularly updates the list of environment-friendly commercial vehicle models as new models enter the local market. The updated list of environment-friendly commercial vehicle models and the tightened qualifying standards are available at www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/air/prob_solutions/environment_friendly_commercial_vehicles.html.

Proposed sewerage works for Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area Advance Works Phase 2 – Site Formation and Engineering Infrastructure approved

The Chief Executive in Council has approved a scheme for the sewerage works for Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area Advance Works Phase 2 – Site Formation and Engineering Infrastructure (formerly known as Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area Advance Works Phase 2 – Site Formation and Engineering Infrastructure). Approval of the sewerage scheme was gazetted today (January 24).

The sewerage scheme comprises construction of about 340 metres of gravity sewers, associated manholes and other ancillary works. Construction works for the scheme by the Civil Engineering and Development Department are to be carried out in conjunction with the proposed road works of Hung Shui Kiu/Ha Tsuen New Development Area Advance Works Phase 2 – Site Formation and Engineering Infrastructure.

Details of the sewerage scheme were published in the Government Gazette on December 28, 2018, and January 4, 2019.