

# Three illegal workers jailed

Three illegal workers comprising a Nigerian and two Vietnamese were jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on August 14.

During operation "Twilight" on August 12, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided three restaurants in Chai Wan and Causeway Bay. A female Vietnamese, a male Vietnamese and a male Nigerian, aged 34 to 46, were arrested. When intercepted they were working as a waitress, a cleaning worker and a dish-washing worker respectively. Upon identity checking, the male Nigerian produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant. Four employers suspected of employing the illegal workers were also arrested and investigation is ongoing.

The three illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday 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. They pleaded guilty to the charge and were sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. Meanwhile, one of them was also charged with one count of using a forged Hong Kong identity card. He was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment. All sentences are to run concurrently, making a total of 15 months' imprisonment.

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

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## Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Thursday, August 15, 2019 is 106.4 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

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## Drop recorded in July's monthly ovitrap index for Aedes albopictus

â€‹The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (August 15) announced that the monthly ovitrap index for Aedes albopictus for July dropped to 10.2 per cent from 16 per cent in June. Although the index has declined and is lower than that for the same period last year, members of the public should continue to take effective prevention and control measures against mosquitoes to reduce the risk of the spread of mosquito-borne diseases in the territory.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "Aedes albopictus is a kind of mosquito that can transmit dengue fever (DF) as well as the Zika virus infection. In view of the 29 local DF cases recorded last year and the warning from the World Health Organization that the number of DF cases recorded in Asian countries this year was exceptionally high when compared with last year, and that Hong Kong recorded a local case of Japanese encephalitis in June and the hot and rainy weather of summer is favourable for massive mosquito breeding,

the community must work with the Government to continue to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. When travelling overseas, particularly to dengue endemic areas, measures should be taken to prevent mosquito bites."

The spokesman said, "The FEHD and relevant government departments are very concerned about mosquito infestation and they launched the All-out Anti-mosquito Operations throughout the territory in April. The major measures include carrying out fogging in scrubby areas within a 100-metre radius around residences weekly to kill adult mosquitoes; carrying out inspections, removing stagnant water, applying larvicide and disposing of abandoned water containers weekly to prevent mosquito breeding; and trimming of grass to discourage resting of adult mosquitoes.

"The relevant government departments have continued the above mosquito prevention and control work in areas under their purview, particularly in the areas with the Area Ovitrap Index (AOI) reaching alert levels. Among the 57 areas surveyed, the number of areas with the AOI exceeding the alert level of 20 per cent has decreased from 17 in June to two in July, i.e. Sheung Shui (24.6 per cent) and Ma On Shan (23.4 per cent). As for the port areas, the monthly ovitrap index for *Aedes albopictus* for July also dropped to 2.2 per cent from 2.6 per cent in June."

An inter-departmental anti-mosquito response mechanism has also been activated in the above-mentioned areas for co-ordinating relevant departments and stakeholders to carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures. Relevant departments have also individually notified the groups that had voluntarily subscribed to the ovitrap rapid alert system when the AOI reached the alert level of 20 per cent. Subscribers have been invited to post specially designed alert notices in the common parts of their premises to remind occupants and staff to carry out anti-mosquito measures promptly."

In addition, the FEHD will launch the third phase of the territory-wide Anti-mosquito Campaign on August 19, which will last for 12 weeks. During the period, the district offices of the FEHD will target areas that have drawn particular concerns, such as public markets, cooked food centres and hawker bazaars, single-block buildings, streets and back lanes, common parts of buildings, village houses, construction sites, vacant sites and road works sites, and step up publicity at those places as well as mosquito prevention and control work at relevant public places.

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The FEHD has also handled mosquito complaints promptly and taken out prosecutions under the relevant ordinance against mosquito breeding. Pest Control Inspection Teams have stepped up inspections and enforcement actions at construction sites against mosquito breeding. This year (as at August 11), the FEHD instituted 116 prosecutions for mosquito breeding found in relevant premises under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), comprising 107 cases involving construction sites and nine cases involving other premises.

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In order to keep the public abreast of the latest situation of mosquito infestation and assist them to take timely mosquito prevention and control measures, the FEHD is releasing two additional phased AOIs for *Aedes albopictus* before the announcement of the monthly AOI and the Monthly Ovitrap Index for *Aedes albopictus*. The FEHD will follow the established practice of notifying relevant government departments of the aforementioned indices so that they can carry out targeted mosquito prevention and control work promptly.

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The spokesman added that as *Aedes albopictus* breeds in small water bodies, members of the public should carry out effective mosquito prevention and control measures, including inspecting their homes and surroundings to remove potential breeding grounds, changing the water in vases and scrubbing the inner surface as well as removing the water in saucers under potted plants at least once a week, properly disposing of containers such as soft drink cans and lunch boxes, and drilling large holes in unused tyres. He also advised public and estate management bodies to keep drains free of blockage and level all defective ground surfaces to prevent accumulation of water. They should also scrub all drains and surface sewers with an alkaline detergent at least once a week to remove any mosquito eggs.

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In addition, rural areas and the vicinity of shrubby areas are the natural habitats for mosquitoes, other insects and animals. Members of the public living in rural areas may install mosquito screens on windows and doors if necessary. Those staying in the natural environment should take appropriate personal protective measures against mosquitoes, such as avoiding staying in the vicinity of shrubby areas for a long time, wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers, and applying DEET-containing insect repellent. Members of the public are reminded to make reports to relevant government departments via 1823 if mosquito problems are detected.

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The spokesman reiterated that effective mosquito prevention and control requires the sustained effort of all parties concerned. The community must work together with the Government to carry out effective anti-mosquito measures.

He also reminded travellers to take the following precautionary measures when visiting areas where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent during the summer holidays:

- \* Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved clothes and trousers;
- \* Use insect repellent over exposed parts of the body when outdoors; and
- \* Use mosquito screens or nets when a room is not air-conditioned.

Travellers returning from areas where mosquito-borne diseases are prevalent should seek medical advice if they have symptoms such as fever, a severe headache or muscle and joint pain. They should also inform their doctor of their travel history.

The ovitrap indices for *Aedes albopictus* in different areas and information on mosquito prevention and control measures are available on the

department website at [www.fehd.gov.hk](http://www.fehd.gov.hk).

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## **Lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach and Golden Beach resume**

Attention TV/Radio Announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has announced that the lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach and Golden Beach in Tuen Mun District resumed today (August 15). The lifesaving services at the beaches were suspended earlier due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty.

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## **Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Swimming Pool temporarily closed**

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (August 15) that Ping Shan Tin Shui Wai Swimming Pool in Yuen Long District has been temporarily closed for cleaning and superchlorination following the discovery of a small amount of vomit in the pool.

It will be reopened at 7pm today.

The department appeals to swimmers to be considerate and to keep swimming pools clean. They are advised not to swim after a full meal and should use the toilet facilities if necessary before swimming.