

Three illegal workers and an illegal immigrant jailed

Three illegal workers comprising an Indian, a Nepalese and a Vietnamese and a Vietnamese illegal immigrant were jailed at Shatin and Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on June 22 and 23 respectively.

During an anti-illegal worker operation conducted on May 10, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a restaurant in Wan Chai. A female Indian illegal worker and a male Nepalese illegal worker, aged 27 and 33, were arrested. When intercepted they were washing dishes. Upon identity checking, they produced for inspection recognisance forms issued by the ImmD, which prohibit them from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that they were non-refoulement claimants. Meanwhile, an employer suspected of employing the illegal workers was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

In addition, during operation "Twilight" conducted on May 23, ImmD investigators raided a restaurant in Causeway Bay. A male Vietnamese illegal worker aged 27 was arrested. When intercepted he was performing kitchen work. Upon identity checking, he 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. Meanwhile, an employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

Furthermore, during a joint operation conducted by the ImmD and the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" on June 20, one male Vietnamese illegal immigrant, aged 40, was arrested in Mong Kok. Upon identity checking, he could not provide any proof of identity. Further investigation revealed that he was an illegal immigrant.

The three illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on June 22 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. After the trial, they were sentenced to imprisonment ranging from 15 months to 17 months. The illegal immigrant was charged at Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on June 23 with remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and breaching a deportation order. He pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced for each to 15 months' imprisonment of which part of the sentence is to run consecutively, making a total of 18 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.

The spokesman also warned that it is an offence for any person in respect of whom a deportation order is in force in Hong Kong to contravene the order. Offenders are liable upon conviction to up to seven years' imprisonment. Furthermore, it is an offence for any person to have landed in Hong Kong unlawfully, and to remain in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and up to three 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 interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

[Temporary suspension of Mobile Library](#)

4 and 11 services

Mobile Libraries 4 and 11 will suspend services during designated periods in July for routine maintenance, a Leisure and Cultural Services Department spokesman announced today (June 25).

Mobile Library 11 will suspend services from July 2 to 7. The affected service points are Easeful Court in Tsing Yi; Cho Yiu Chuen, Kwai Shing West Estate and Kwai Shing East Estate in Kwai Chung; Sun Chui Estate in Sha Tin; Po Tin Estate in Tuen Mun; and Tin Wah Estate in Tin Shui Wai. For enquiries about Mobile Library 11 services, please call 2479 1055.

Mobile Library 4 will suspend services from July 11 to 17. The affected service points are Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung, Discovery Bay, Pui O, Shui Hau and Tong Fuk. For enquiries about Mobile Library 4 services, please call 2984 9417.

Readers are welcome to use other public libraries during the service suspension periods. They may also renew library materials by telephoning 2698 0002 or 2827 2833, or via www.hkpl.gov.hk.

Contractors of rooftop works at Hing Tung Shopping Centre in Shau Kei Wan convicted for illegal discharge of wastewater

The contractors of rooftop works at Hing Tung Shopping Centre in Shau Kei Wan illegally discharged wastewater into the communal storm drain and polluted Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter. The contractor, Sinocham (HK) Enterprises Limited, and its sub-contractor were convicted and fined a total of \$16,000 by Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (June 25) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO).

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) spokesman said that the department received complaints from members of the public this January that milky wastewater was discharged into Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter. Upon investigation and evidence collection by the EPD, it was confirmed that the wastewater originated from resurfacing works at the rooftop of Hing Tung Shopping Centre. During the works period, the contractor failed to take appropriate wastewater discharge measures, resulting in the runoff of waterproof materials through the storm drain into Shau Kei Wan Typhoon

Shelter. The EPD subsequently prosecuted both involved contractors according to the WPCO.

The wastewater generated from construction sites is regulated under the WPCO. The spokesman reminded all construction contractors to take appropriate measures to prevent any untreated wastewater or construction materials from being discharged into storm drains to protect the environment. Under the WPCO, it is an offence for anyone to discharge wastewater into storm drains. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.

Speech by FS at “Innovative Blockchain-based Remittance Solution to Enhance Financial Inclusion” press conference (English only)(with photo)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the "Miles apart but close at Heart – Innovative Blockchain-based Remittance Solution to Enhance Financial Inclusion" press conference today (June 25):

Jack (Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group, Mr Jack Ma), Eric (Chief Executive Officer and Executive Chairman of Ant Financial Services Group, Mr Eric Jing), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my pleasure to join you today, witnessing another breakthrough application of Fintech in Hong Kong: using blockchain technology for cross-border remittances.

While this application would be a pilot at first, allowing Alipay users in Hong Kong to send money to the Philippines, it will in the long run offer a more efficient and cost-effective way of transferring money around the world. Hong Kong is the international financial centre in Asia and it is most fitting that Ant Financial has chosen to kick off this pilot project right here.

While we take pride in Hong Kong's robust and effective financial regulatory regime that is well in line with international standards, our financial regulators are doing their part to facilitate and foster innovations in the industry. With their dedicated liaison platforms and sandboxes, our financial regulators are allowing financial services providers to conduct pilot trials on Fintech solutions in a confined environment.

For instance, the Fintech Supervisory Sandbox of the Hong Kong Monetary

Authority (HKMA) is well loved, and well used by banks. Through the Sandbox, banks and partnering Fintech firms are able to gather real-life data and user feedback on their new Fintech-driven solutions more easily, so that they can make refinements to their proposed solutions as appropriate before full market launch. In just two years' time, 22 new technology products and services have been tested in HKMA's Sandbox and have been rolled out to the market.

I am glad to see that Fintech is bringing greater convenience to the public as witnessed in the e-wallet market over the past few years. It all began in 2015 when the Payment Systems and Stored Value Facilities Ordinance came into operation which provided a clear and certain licensing and regulatory framework for stored value facilities (SVFs). With clarity and certainty in regulation, SVF licensees commenced their safe and sound operation and have now developed a secure, efficient and diversified electronic payment industry laying a solid and strong foundation for the development of the e-wallet market. Alipay Hong Kong certainly played a key role in the course as it is one of the first SVF licensees in Hong Kong.

Healthy competition amongst strong SVF operators has led to innovations and new services such as electronic coupons, family group e-wallet management, online shopping, insurance and QR code payment, all to the benefit of the general public. It is therefore not surprising that the number of SVF accounts in use has jumped by 15.4 per cent in just a year's time to 46.7 million by end-2017 while the value of transactions increased by 27.7 per cent to over \$38 billion.

More exciting developments in Hong Kong are in the pipeline, with the launch of the Faster Payment System (FPS) in September this year. This new financial infrastructure will provide full connectivity between banks, SVF operators, merchants and consumers. Participating banks and SVF operators can provide real-time credit transfer and real-time direct debit services to facilitate payments between merchants and customers, as well as peer-to-peer transfers through the FPS platform.

The HKMA is also working with the industry to explore how to enable merchants to use a single QR code for accepting mobile payments from different SVF operators. This is conducive to a wider adoption of QR code payment in Hong Kong and will enhance user experience.

Ladies and gentlemen, an exciting new era of Fintech awaits. The Hong Kong SAR Government will continue to do its best as a promoter and facilitator for Fintech companies in Hong Kong to grow and prosper.

Thank you very much indeed.



Xinqin opera and traditional Cantonese opera to tell tale of two genres

The Chinese Opera Festival, presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will stage "A Tale of Two Genres – Xiqin Opera and Traditional Cantonese Opera" in August. Featuring Lu Weiping, a Representative Bearer of Xiqin Opera as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Cantonese opera virtuosos Law Ka-ying, Wan Fai-yin, Cheng Wing-mui, the performances will highlight interrelated aspects of the two genres while revealing elements of their shared origin.

Xiqin opera is a regional genre that originated from the Xiqin singing style of the Ming dynasty (i.e. qinqiang and Gansu singing styles). It spread to the Hai (Lu) Feng area of Shanwei and evolved along with local folk arts and customs. The genre gradually developed its own form during the early Qing dynasty. It was inscribed in the first listing of National Intangible Cultural Heritage in China in 2006. The Haifeng County Xiqin Opera Heritage Centre (formerly Haifeng Xiqin Operatic Troupe) is at present the only professional group specialising in Xiqin opera. Its Director, Lu Weiping, will lead the troupe's performance in Hong Kong.

In this programme, shared aspects of classic plays of Xiqin opera and traditional Cantonese opera will be performed on stage. "Executing Own Son at the Gate", a "pihuang" play of Xiqin opera, shares similar content with "Liulang Executing His Son", a Cantonese opera play in the classic singing style. The former is also a representative play of the "laosheng" (old male) role, while the latter has its own distinctive singing styles, including the reprimanding tone of Yang Liulang and the singing style of Mu Gua. "Executing Zheng En", which is sung in "xipi", resembles the Cantonese opera play "Executing the Duke's Second Brother", which is sung in the classic singing style. "Executing the Duke's Second Brother" is one of the "Eighteen Plays of Cantonese Opera" of the Qing dynasty, as well as one of the earliest great Cantonese opera plays in the classic singing style of Guangdong. Traditional

skilful routines will be demonstrated in excerpts of Xiqin opera. In "Liu Xi Chastising His Sons", for example, Liu Xi performs the traditional chair stunt, using only his waist, hips and legs to move and turn the chair.

Details of the programme are as follow:

August 3 (Friday) 7.30pm

Cantonese opera in classic singing style "Liulang Executing His Son" and Xiqin opera "Executing Zheng En"

August 4 (Saturday) 7.30pm

Xiqin opera "Executing Own Son at the Gate" and Cantonese opera in classic singing style "Executing the Duke's Second Brother"

August 5 (Sunday) 2.30pm

Xiqin opera Excerpts: "Beating Hands", "Grasping the Vanity Case", "Returning to Xiqi", "Liu Xi Chastising His Sons" and Cantonese opera in classic singing style "A Blood Oath Sworn in Grotto"

All performances will be staged at Theatre, Ko Shan Theatre. Tickets priced at \$150, \$220, \$280 and \$340 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk).

For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit (www.cof.gov.hk).

A Meet-the-Artists session on "Xinqin opera and Cantonese opera with Analogous Repertories" featuring Law Ka-ying and Lu Weiping will be held at 7.30pm on August 2 (Thursday) at AC2, Level 4, Administration Building, Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Admission is free. Limited seats will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.