

Two illegal workers jailed

Two Vietnamese illegal workers were jailed by the Shatin Magistrates' Courts yesterday (September 19).

During operation "Twilight" conducted on September 16, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a food factory in Tuen Mun district. Two Vietnamese men, aged 32 and 49, were arrested while working as odd-job workers.

The illegal workers were charged at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts on September 19 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration, and taking employment while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force respectively. They pleaded guilty to the charges and were sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. Meanwhile, one of the males was also charged with one count of remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully. He was sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment, with parts of the sentences to run consecutively, making a total of 18 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land is 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. 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 upon conviction face 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. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. 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. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

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 immediately.

CHP announces two new confirmed melioidosis infection cases over past week

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 20) said that two new confirmed melioidosis infection cases had been recorded in the past week (September 13 to 19).

The first case involves an 80-year-old male with underlying illness who lives in Sham Shui Po. He developed a fever and decreased general condition since September 14 and was admitted to Caritas Medical Centre on the same day. He is in critical condition.

The second case involves a 70-year-old male with underlying illness who lives in Sham Shui Po. He developed a fever, diarrhoea and vomiting since September 15 and was admitted to Caritas Medical Centre on the same day. He is in stable condition.

The CHP is investigating the infection source of the cases. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing. So far, 15 melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. In 2023, 17 melioidosis infection cases were recorded.

A spokesman for the CHP reiterated that person-to-person transmission and animal-to-human transmission are rare, but melioidosis bacteria can survive in the local environment. Melioidosis is an endemic disease in Hong Kong and melioidosis cases have been recorded in Hong Kong each year. According to literature, infection cases are more common after typhoons or storms. The bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei* of melioidosis in soil and muddy water may become exposed to the ground after typhoons or storms, and the bacteria could spread more easily with strong winds or storms. As such, the number of melioidosis cases may increase.

The CHP reminded members of the public that melioidosis can be spread by contaminated soil and water during and after typhoons and storms. Where practicable, people should stay indoors during typhoons and storms, avoid travelling to areas with potential flooding, and do not wade in or have contact with muddy water and soil. In addition, high-risk individuals should avoid paths near stormwater drains where aerosols may be generated from contaminated water.

Members of the public should also take the following preventive measures against infection:

- Avoid contact with contaminated soil;
- Wear appropriate protective clothing or footwear when participating in activities with possible contact with soil or water, e.g. using gloves and wearing boots. High-risk individuals may also consider wearing a surgical mask;
- Wash or shower after exposure to contaminated water or soil;
- Always clean any wounds as soon as possible and cover any cuts or grazes with waterproof dressings;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water after handling soil or gardening;
- Observe food hygiene and avoid drinking raw water; and
- Travellers can contract the disease through outdoor water sports. Risk of infection can be minimised by avoiding exposure to water sources (such as rivers, ponds or lakes) that might be contaminated.

The CHP appealed to members of the public to seek medical advice if they develop symptoms, in particular people with diabetes or other immunocompromised conditions, in order to receive appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment. For more information on melioidosis, please visit the website of the CHP at www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/101110.html.

15 owners or representatives of

owners' corporations fined a total of over \$73,000 for causing fire hazards such as by propping open smoke stop doors

The Fire Services Department (FSD) has been mounting territory-wide special enforcement actions at old composite buildings since late April. As of end-August, the FSD inspected 930 old composite buildings and issued over 5 300 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) to relevant individuals or responsible parties, requiring them to abate the identified fire hazards within a specified timeframe. The fire hazards mainly involve wedging or propping open smoke stop doors and obstructing means of escape.

Fifteen owners or representatives of owners' corporations from 13 old composite buildings were prosecuted by the FSD for failing to comply with the requirements of the FHANs. They were subsequently convicted and fined a total of \$73,400 at Shatin Magistrates' Courts, Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts, Eastern Magistrates' Courts, Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts and Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts this week and last week. Above all, one of the old composite buildings was found to have multiple smoke stop doors propped open, resulting in its owners' corporation being fined a total of \$19,200 at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (September 20).

According to the Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation, a person on whom an FHAN is served commits an offence if that person fails to comply with a requirement of the notice within the period specified in the notice, or if the person on whom a fire hazard abatement notice is served causes, permits or suffers the fire hazard to recur at any time within a period of 12 months after the date of service of the notice, the person commits an offence. Upon conviction, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$100,000, and an additional fine of \$10,000 for each day the offense continues.

The FSD reminds the public not to wedge or prop open smoke stop doors or obstruct means of escape to ensure public safety.

Sixth stop of "Anti-drug Info Zone: Stride Ahead Into A Drug-free Future"

Roving Exhibition to be staged at TKO Spot this weekend

The "Anti-drug Info Zone: Stride Ahead Into A Drug-free Future" Roving Exhibition (Anti-drug Roving Exhibition) will be held at TKO Spot in Tseung Kwan O tomorrow (September 21) and September 22. Members of the public are welcome to visit the exhibition at Venue A and Venue D on the G/F of TKO Spot from 10am to 9pm.

The Anti-drug Roving Exhibition is co-organised by the Narcotics Division (ND) of the Security Bureau and the Action Committee Against Narcotics, and is designed with the theme of interstellar space. Drugs are portrayed in the exhibition as aliens that should be defeated. This visual representation helps present the adverse effects caused by drugs on one's mind and body in a vivid manner. By seeing the aliens, everyone will be strongly reminded again to stay away from drugs at all times, and of the dire consequences of committing drug crimes.

Including elements of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and multimedia, the Anti-drug Roving Exhibition is divided into different theme zones with games, digital exhibition panels and a photo booth to spread anti-drug knowledge to visitors, and provide them with information about criminal liability for drug offences, how to seek help and so on. Anti-drug videos, animations and leaflets will also be available at the Anti-drug Roving Exhibition to provide visitors with precise anti-drug information. After the sixth stop, the Anti-drug Roving Exhibition will be held at shopping malls in different districts and at tertiary institutes until the end of March next year.

Furthermore, the ND has been closely monitoring drug trends in and outside Hong Kong and carrying out preventive education and publicity in a timely manner to deepen the public's understanding of the harmful effects caused by drug abuse. Recently, the ND has produced an animated video about "space oil", which depicts a youngster falling into a drug abyss after inhaling "space oil" through vaping. "Space oil" is a kind of liquid that has harmful substances illegally added to it. Usually, its main ingredient is etomidate, an anaesthetic that can only be prescribed by a doctor according to the law. Anyone who illegally possesses and uses this substance commits an offence. "Space oil" may also be mixed with other drugs, including cannabis, methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice"), ketamine (commonly known as "K"), etc. "Space oil" can cause addiction as well as serious physical and mental harm, and even death. Therefore, vaping "space oil" is the same as taking drugs. The animated video will be shown at the Anti-drug Roving Exhibition. Members of the public are also encouraged to watch the animated video on the ND's relevant webpage (www.nd.gov.hk/en/publicity_materials.html) and official accounts ("narcotics.divisionhk") on Facebook and Instagram.

Apart from the animated video on "space oil", netizens are also

encouraged to follow the ND's official accounts ("narcotics.divisionhk") on Facebook and Instagram for the latest anti-drug information. The website (www.nd.gov.hk) of the ND also contains detailed information about drugs, including frequently asked questions about cocaine, cannabis and "Ice" for the public's reference, as well as updates on the Anti-drug Roving Exhibition (www.nd.gov.hk/en/rovingexhibition.html). If members of the public encounter any drug problems, they can message 98 186 186 on instant messaging applications WhatsApp and WeChat, or call the 24-hour hotline 186 186 to seek information or assistance from professional social workers.

Update on dengue fever

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 20) reported the latest number of dengue fever (DF) cases, and urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From September 13 to yesterday (September 19), the CHP recorded three imported DF cases; the patients had been to India (two cases) and the Mainland (one case) during the incubation periods.

As of yesterday, 64 cases of DF, including 60 imported and four local cases, had been recorded in 2024. In 2023, 62 imported cases of DF were recorded.

According to the World Health Organization, the global incidence of DF has markedly increased over the past two decades, posing a substantial public health challenge. In 2023, ongoing transmissions, combined with an unexpected spike in DF cases, had resulted in close to a historic high of over 6.5 million cases, and more than 7 300 dengue-related deaths reported in over 80 countries/territories. The latest surveillance data shows that there is an increase in DF cases noted in some places in Asia (such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) compared to the same period last year. Since the beginning of 2024, the Americas, including Brazil, Argentina and Peru, have recorded over 11 million cases, a record number. Detailed information on the latest DF situation in Hong Kong, as well as neighbouring and overseas countries and areas, has been uploaded to the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/df_imported_cases_and_overseas_figures_eng.pdf).

"Apart from general measures, travellers returning from areas affected by DF should apply insect repellent for 14 days upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to a doctor," a spokesman for the CHP said.

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and

drains to prevent blockage;

- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing light-coloured long-sleeved clothes and trousers, and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or uncovered areas of the body when doing outdoor activities.

DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;
- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Reapply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

â€œâ€œThe public should call 1823 in case of mosquito problems and may visit the following pages for more information: the DF page of the [CHP](#) and the [Travel Health Service](#), the latest [Travel Health News](#), [tips for using insect repellents](#), and the CHP [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#).