

## Trade instructed to suspend importing and selling of Ireland Dooriel Creek raw oysters from production area code MO-AN-DC in Ireland

â€‹The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (February 18) instructed the trade to suspend the import of Ireland Dooriel Creek raw oysters from production area code MO-AN-DC. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately should they possess it.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "The CFS was notified by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health of few food poisoning cases which involved consumption of raw oysters at a restaurant in Tsim Sha Tsui. The CFS conducted investigations at the restaurant concerned and found that the restaurant had sold Ireland Dooriel Creek raw oysters from production area code MO-AN-DC. For the sake of prudence, the CFS has immediately instructed the trade to suspend the import into and sale within Hong Kong of all Ireland Dooriel Creek raw oysters from production area code MO-AN-DC."

The CFS has also instructed the supplier and restaurants concerned to stop supplying and selling the affected raw oysters immediately, and is tracing the distribution of the affected product. The trade should also stop using or selling the product concerned immediately should they possess it.

The spokesman pointed out that as oysters feed by filtering a large volume of seawater, pathogens can accumulate in them if they are grown in or harvested from contaminated water. Raw or partially cooked oysters are high-risk foods. Susceptible groups, such as pregnant women, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems or liver diseases, should avoid eating raw oysters.

The CFS will inform the Irish authorities and will also notify the local trade. It will continue to follow up on the incident and take appropriate action to safeguard food safety and public health. An investigation is ongoing.

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## Land and Development Advisory Committee holds meeting

At its meeting today (February 18), the Land and Development Advisory

Committee (LDAC) was briefed on the proposed amendments to the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) in three aspects, namely speeding up building inspection and repair, rationalising the policy for handling unauthorised building works (UBWs), and enhancing building works safety.

Members generally supported the guiding principles and major directions of the proposals. Apart from increasing deterrence against non-compliance with Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) notices and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme (MWIS) notices (such as introducing fixed penalty, increasing the penalty levels and introducing a new offence in respect of personal injury or property damage caused by dilapidated external walls of buildings), Members emphasised the importance of providing financial and technical support to building owners and owners' corporations, especially elderly owners and those with limited means. Members agreed with the adoption of a pragmatic and facilitating approach in handling "minor UBWs" on the one hand, and enhancing enforcement effectiveness and deterrence against "serious UBWs" on the other. On enhancing building works safety, Members generally agreed with the proposals to enhance construction site safety through strengthening enforcement and enhancing registration and disciplinary systems.

Specifically, regarding the Government's proposals to expedite building inspection and repair, Members suggested that the Government should raise awareness of the relevant regulatory requirements among the public and provide more support for the building owners in complying with MBIS and MWIS notices. For example, leaflets which present information in layman's terms should be published to facilitate understanding of the Buildings Ordinance by members of the public.

On handling UBWs, Members supported the Government's proposal to expand the scope of the Minor Works Control System and Designated Exempted Works by adopting a pragmatic and facilitating approach in handling "minor UBWs", and to review the scope on a regular basis. Members acknowledged the Government's intention to increase penalties and pool enforcement resources against "serious UBWs", especially those which posed significant risks to structural and public safety. Some Members also suggested that the Government should require owners to engage registered building professionals to identify the presence of UBWs for rectification before a property transaction, so as to better protect the interests of purchasers, while some Members suggested the Government to consider regularising some existing UBWs that were verified safe by relevant building professionals.

Members also emphasised the importance of enhancing building works safety and reducing the number of accidents at construction sites. Members suggested clearly delineating the roles and legal responsibilities of different key parties involved under the Buildings Ordinance, so that appropriate measures could be taken by all parties to improve building works safety at construction sites. Members also considered that more analysis on the statistics on accidents in construction sites would be conducive to identifying and addressing the root causes of accidents in a targeted manner. Training and education for key personnel and workers on site should also be strengthened.

The Government is engaging the relevant stakeholders as well as members of the general public as part of the two-month consultation exercise, which will run until February 28, 2025. The Government will take into account the suggestions of the Members and the views collected during the consultation period when finalising the proposals. The target is to introduce an amendment bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of 2026.

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## **Import of poultry meat and products from Cheshire West and Chester District of Cheshire County in UK suspended**

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (February 18) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in the Cheshire West and Chester District of Cheshire County in the United Kingdom (UK), the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products (including poultry eggs) from the area with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that according to the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong imported about 910 tonnes of chilled and frozen poultry meat, and about 1.34 million poultry eggs from the UK last year.

"The CFS has contacted the British authority over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the WOAH and the relevant authorities on the avian influenza outbreak. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

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## **24 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photos)**

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Lightshadow" to combat illegal food delivery couriers from January 2 to today (February 18). A total of 14

suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected aiders and abettors were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, 14 suspected illegal workers and 10 suspected aiders and abettors were arrested by ImmD Task Force officers. The 14 arrested suspected illegal workers are non-ethnic Chinese males aged 21 to 54. Among them, 13 men were found to be holders of recognisance forms and were non-refoulement claimants, which prohibit them from taking any employment in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the 10 suspected aiders and abettors are Hong Kong residents age 17 to 41. The eight men and two women were arrested for being suspected of a conspiracy to defraud delivery platforms by selling or renting their food delivery courier accounts to the illegal workers.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her 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."

The spokesman warned, "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."

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 reminded 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 ImmD 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 or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



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## Missing boy in Kwai Chung located

Â Â Â Â Â A boy who went missing in Kwai Chung has been located.

Â Â Â Â Â Ma Kin-hei, aged 14, went missing after he was last seen at Kwai Chung Interchange on February 9 morning. His family made a report to Police.

Â Â Â Â Â The boy was located on Tin Yan Road, Tin Shui Wai yesterday (February 17) afternoon. He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.