

Two illegal workers jailed

Two Indian illegal workers, each holding a recognisance form, were jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on March 10.

Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators received a referral from the Hong Kong Police Force to further investigate an illegal employment case in January. Enforcement officers arrested two male Indian workers, aged 49 and 35, who were odd-job workers in a recycling depot in Pat Heung. Upon identity checking, they produced for inspection recognisance forms issued by the ImmD, which prohibit them from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that one of them was a non-refoulement claimant.

The two illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on March 10 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 14 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 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 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 the 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.

Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (March 12), 16 COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 10 711 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 665 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 214 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 206 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 21 public hospitals, a community treatment facility and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, among which 13 patients are in critical condition, 10 are in serious condition and the remaining 183 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	8323, 10931, 10936, 10954, 10958, 10990, 11002, 11004, 11013, 11014, 11034, 11065, 11067, 11098, 11110, 11127
Critical	1989, 3496, 6125, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9612, 9907, 10358, 10851, 10904, 10984
Serious	6386, 7468, 8221, 9055, 9135, 10367, 10585, 10865, 10942, 11055

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected illicit cigarettes \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (March 11) seized about 470 000 suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$1.3 million and a duty potential of about \$900,000 in Fanling.

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During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Fanling yesterday evening, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes at an industrial building unit. A 41-year-old man suspected to be in connection with the case was arrested.

Customs believes that a suspected illicit cigarette storehouse was raided during the operation. Investigation is ongoing.

Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

Members of the public may report any suspected illicit cigarette activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).



[Fraudulent websites and phishing instant messages related to Standard Chartered Bank \(Hong Kong\) Limited](#)

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

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the

public to a press release issued by Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Limited on fraudulent websites and phishing instant messages, which has been reported to the HKMA. Hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#) for ease of reference by members of the public.

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information to the websites concerned or has conducted any financial transactions through the websites should contact the bank concerned using the contact information provided in the press release, and report to the Police or contact the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

Red tides sighted

Four red tides have been sighted over the past week, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (March 12).

On March 5, a member of the public spotted the first red tide at Sheung Sze Wan. Staff of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) spotted the second and third red tides at Tolo Channel and Port Shelter, including Ma Nam Wat and Kau Sai fish culture zones on March 8 and March 11 respectively. The fourth red tide was spotted by staff member of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department at Silverstrand Beach, Sai Kung, today.

Apart from the first red tide, which has dissipated, the other three tides still persist. No fish deaths associated with the four red tides have been reported as of today.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The first and fourth red tides were formed by *Noctiluca scintillans*, while the second and third red tides were formed by *Gonyaulax polygramma*. Both algae are commonly found in Hong Kong waters and are non-toxic."

The AFCD urged mariculturists at Ma Nam Wat, Kau Sai, Kai Lung Wan, Tai Tau Chau, Leung Shuen Wan, Tap Mun, Kau Lau Wan, Sham Wan, Wong Wan, Yim Tin Tsai, Yim Tin Tsai (East), Yung Shue Au and Lo Fu Wat fish culture zones to monitor the situation closely and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue to monitor red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.