

Seventeen persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photo)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including operations codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion", from January 18 to yesterday (January 20). A total of eight suspected illegal workers, four suspected employers, four illegal immigrants and one overstayer were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 28 target locations including a commercial building, a factory, a garage, a garbage collection depot, premises under renovation, a recycling site, residential buildings, restaurants, a salon and stores. Six suspected illegal workers and three employers were arrested. The suspected illegal workers comprised two men and four women, aged 34 to 48. Among them, one man was suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Meanwhile, three men, aged 32 to 66, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

In addition, during operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 44 target locations in Eastern District, Hung Hom and Mong Kok including a company, a container yard and restaurants. Two suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer, four illegal immigrants and one overstayer were arrested. The suspected illegal workers comprised two women, aged 26 and 45. Meanwhile, one woman, aged 65, was suspected of employing the illegal workers. Three male illegal immigrants and one female illegal immigrant, aged 26 to 50, were arrested. Furthermore, one male overstayer, aged 33, was also arrested. Among them, two suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer, one illegal immigrant and one overstayer were handled by the ImmD.

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

The 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. 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 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.



Proprietor fined for violation of safety legislation

Baltrans International Moving Limited was fined \$90,000 at West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (January 21) for violation of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance. The prosecutions were launched by the Labour Department.

The case involved a fatal accident that occurred on June 22, 2019, at a warehouse in Kwai Chung. While a worker was handling a wooden crate placed on two plywood carts, the wooden crate suddenly toppled and pressed him to the ground. He was sent to the hospital and died on the same day.

Update on Candida auris cases at Princess Margaret Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Candida auris carrier cases, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital gave the following update today (January 21):

Having conducted contact tracing, two more female patients (aged 63 and 64) in a medicine and geriatrics ward of the hospital were confirmed as Candida auris carriers while not having signs of infection. The patients are now being treated under isolation with stable condition.

The hospital will continue the contact tracing of close contacts of the patients in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. A series of enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted to prevent the spread of Candida auris:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced admission screening for patients and environmental screening procedures;
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients;
4. Application of PCR rapid testing for early identification of carriers; and

5. Application of designated equipment for patient use to avoid cross-infection.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Scientific Committees under CHP publish consensus interim recommendations on use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong

The Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases under the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health today (January 21) published the consensus interim recommendations reached subsequent to the joint meeting on January 7 on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Hong Kong.

The meeting, joined by the Chief Executive's expert advisory panel, reviewed the latest scientific evidence on the epidemiology and clinical features of COVID-19, published clinical data on the COVID-19 vaccines to be procured by the Government and local data, as well as recommendations and practices by overseas health authorities.

The current recommendations focused on two vaccines, namely BNT162b2 provided by Fosun Pharma/BioNTech and AZD1222 provided by AstraZeneca.

The recommendations are summarised below:

- Both vaccines consist of a schedule of two doses. Individuals should complete their vaccination with the same type of vaccine.
- Priority should be accorded to high-risk groups that are most vulnerable to the development of severe disease or death from COVID-19 infection, have greater risks of exposure to severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and transmitting the virus to susceptible and vulnerable patients, or are critical for maintaining essential societal functioning.

- Priority has been suggested to be accorded to the following groups:

First: Residents and staff of residential care homes for the elderly/persons with disabilities and other institutional facilities;

Second: Workers in health-care settings, workers in other essential services who are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19, and persons aged 60 years or above; and

Third: Persons with chronic medical problems aged between 16 and 59 years.

Members noted that vaccination is only one of the tools in the overall public health response to COVID-19. There is a need to continue public health strategies on non-pharmaceutical interventions, including social distancing, good hand hygiene and wearing a mask in public, to reduce the risk of transmission.

Details on the scientific evidence considered and the rationale for the consensus interim recommendations on the use of COVID-19 vaccines are available at the CHP website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/24008.html). The interim recommendations may be updated based on additional safety and efficacy data from phase III clinical trials, international scientific advances and local regulatory developments.

Tender amounts submitted for site at the Peak

The Lands Department announced today (January 21) that in respect of the tender for the site Rural Building Lot No. 1211 at Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 Mansfield Road, the Peak, Hong Kong, which was awarded on December 23, 2020, to the successful tenderer, Novel Bliss Limited (parent company: Wharf Development Limited), on a 50-year land grant at a premium of \$12,000,000,000, the tender amounts submitted by the unsuccessful tenderers in descending order are published on an anonymous basis as follows:

- (1) \$10,688,000,000
- (2) \$10,080,000,000
- (3) \$9,838,000,000
- (4) \$8,050,000,000
- (5) \$7,520,000,000
- (6) \$6,038,000,000

The information disclosed in this press release is for information only.