

## Nine immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" yesterday (December 27). A total of six illegal workers and three suspected employers were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Task Force officers raided 20 target locations including restaurants, hair salons, a recycling site, a warehouse and a roadside vendor. Six illegal workers and three employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised three men and three women, aged 31 to 43. Among them, two men were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, one woman was suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card, and one woman was suspected of using and being in possession of a Hong Kong identity card relating to another person. Meanwhile, two men and a woman, aged 51 to 55, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"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 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.

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## **Effective Exchange Rate Index**

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, December 28, 2018 is 104.7 (down 0.4 against yesterday's index).

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## **Update on number of dengue fever cases**

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 28) reported the latest number of cases of dengue fever (DF), and again urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From December 21 to 27, the CHP recorded four imported DF cases. The patients had been to Cambodia (one case), the Philippines (one case), Thailand (one case) and Vietnam (one case) during the incubation period.

As of yesterday (December 27), 163 cases had been confirmed this year, of which 29 were local cases and 134 were imported cases. The imported cases were mainly from Thailand (36), Mainland China (29) and the Philippines (23).

DF remains endemic in some areas in Asia and beyond. The latest figures for 2018 revealed that 82 874 cases had been recorded in Thailand, 3 219 in Singapore (since December 31, 2017) and 195 in Japan. In the Americas, the

latest figures indicated that 241 664 and 77 159 cases have been filed in Brazil and Mexico respectively in 2018.

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 loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or exposed parts of the body when doing outdoor activities.

To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from areas affected by DF and Zika virus infection should apply insect repellent for 14 days or at least 21 days respectively upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor. 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
- Re-apply 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 two months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public may refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#) for details.

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# Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 28) released the latest grading of water quality of four gazetted beaches which are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

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Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, an EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a storm or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. Latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the department's websites on Beach Water Quality ([www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach](http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach)) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

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## [Hong Kong Observatory Almanac 2019 to go on sale](#)

The Hong Kong Observatory Almanac 2019 will go on sale on December 31.

The Almanac is bilingual and tabulated by month. It contains information including the traditional Chinese calendar, solar terms and moon phases, as well as the times of daily sunrise, sun transit, sunset, moonrise, moon transit, moonset and high and low tides, with the times of meridian passage and the rising and setting of the sun and planets graphically illustrated. The Almanac also includes a detailed Sun Path Diagram and star maps of the four quarters of the year. In addition, information on the duration of twilight, determination of apparent solar time, details of solar and lunar eclipses, observation of meteor streams and planetary phenomena, as well as background information on calendars and the 24 solar terms are included.

At \$52 a copy, the Hong Kong Observatory Almanac 2019 is available for sale at the Hong Kong Observatory Resource Centre, the Publications Sales Unit of the Information Services Department and the Kowloon Map Publications Centre of the Lands Department. The public can also purchase the Almanac through the online Government Bookstore at [www.bookstore.gov.hk](http://www.bookstore.gov.hk).