

Three core members of syndicate arranging cross-boundary bogus marriages jailed for conspiracy to defraud

The Immigration Department (ImmD) smashed a syndicate arranging cross-boundary bogus marriages in a series of territory-wide operations codenamed "Flashspear" conducted since May 2016. A total of 86 Hong Kong and Mainland residents were arrested, including three core syndicate members who were Hong Kong permanent residents. The three core syndicate members, comprising two men and a woman, aged 24 to 63, were earlier convicted of the offences of conspiracy to defraud, and were jailed for 30 to 42 months at the District Court today (September 7).

An ImmD spokesman said that the department has been very concerned about non-Hong Kong residents obtaining residency by means of contracting bogus marriages with Hong Kong residents. After months of intelligence analysis and in-depth investigation, a syndicate was identified to have recruited young people to contract bogus marriages via social media websites and social networking mobile applications. The three core syndicate members were suspected of arranging for these young people to contract bogus marriages with Mainlanders so as to enable the bogus spouses to apply for "Tanqin" exit endorsements to visit Hong Kong, and eventually apply for a One-way Permit for settlement in Hong Kong. After months of planning, the ImmD mounted a series of operations and smashed this cross-boundary bogus marriage syndicate. In the course of the operations, investigators seized computers, mobile phones, notebooks, phonebooks and account books from the premises of the three core members. The syndicate was believed to have been operating for four years and involved in at least 66 bogus marriages.

"During the investigation, the Immigration Department arrested a total of 86 Hong Kong and Mainland residents (42 men and 44 women) aged 19 to 61. Apart from the three core syndicate members who were sentenced to imprisonment today, 19 arrestees were convicted of the offence of conspiracy to defraud. Of these 19 persons, 10 were sentenced to imprisonment of 11 to 18 months while nine are pending for sentence by court. The operation is ongoing and more prosecutions may be instituted. In addition, the relevant Mainland authorities have been notified about the cases of the Mainlanders," the spokesman said.

"The Immigration Department will continue to spare no effort in combating bogus marriages and other related illicit activities. For people who have obtained their residence in Hong Kong by fraudulent means, their Hong Kong identity card and residence status will be invalidated according to the laws of Hong Kong. They will also be subject to removal back to their place of origin," the spokesman said.

The spokesman urged the public not to defy the law by participating in activities related to bogus marriages anywhere and not to make a false oath before immigration officers for the purpose of procuring a marriage in Hong Kong. Those directing others to contract a bogus marriage may also be guilty of the offence of conspiracy to defraud.

Under the laws of Hong Kong, it is an offence to make false representation to Immigration Officers. Offenders are liable to prosecution and to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. Aiders and abettors are also liable to prosecution and the same penalties.

Any person who for the purpose of procuring a marriage, or a certificate or license for marriage, knowingly and wilfully makes a false oath or makes or signs a false declaration shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to, upon conviction, imprisonment for seven years and a fine. Anyone who commits the offence of conspiracy to defraud is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty is imprisonment for 14 years.

Special traffic arrangements on Hong Kong Island

Police will implement special traffic arrangements this Sunday (September 9) to facilitate two public events to be held on Hong Kong Island.

(1)

The following traffic arrangements will be implemented from 5am to 12 noon:

Road closure

- The slow lane of southbound Man Yiu Street near Yiu Sing Street;
- Yiu Sing Street;
- Lung Wo Road (except the slow lane of westbound Lung Wo Road between Tim Wa Avenue and Edinburgh Place, and southbound Lung Wo Road near P2 Road);
- The western general pick-up/drop-off and loading/unloading area on Lung Wo Road north of Star Ferry Multi-Storey Car Park;
- Road A2; and
- Eastbound Road P2.

Traffic diversions

- Traffic along southbound Man Yiu Street cannot turn left to Lung Wo Road;
- Traffic along southbound Man Yiu Street cannot turn left to Yiu Sing Street;
- Traffic along eastbound Man Cheung Street cannot enter Lung Wo Road and will be diverted via Man Yiu Street;
- Traffic along eastbound Man Po Street cannot enter Yiu Sing Street and will be diverted via Man Yiu Street;
- Traffic along Edinburgh Place east of City Hall cannot enter Lung Wo Road;
- Traffic along northbound Legislative Council Road cannot turn left to westbound Lung Wo Road. Affected vehicles will be diverted via southbound Legislative Council Road;
- Traffic along eastbound Lung Wui Road cannot enter westbound Lung Wo Road;
- Traffic along westbound Fenwick Pier Street cannot enter westbound Lung Wo Road; and
- Vehicles on eastbound Lung Wo Road heading for Lung Wui Road will be diverted via southbound Man Yiu Street, eastbound Connaught Place, southbound Connaught Place, eastbound Connaught Road Central, eastbound Harcourt Road and northbound Tim Mei Avenue.

Suspension of parking spaces

All motorcycle parking spaces at the general pick-up/drop-off and loading/unloading area on Lung Wo Road north of Star Ferry Multi-Storey Car Park will be suspended.

(2)

The following roads will be intermittently closed from about 3.30pm until the crowd has dispersed and traffic resumes normal:

- Des Voeux Road Central;
- Eastbound Queensway between Des Voeux Road Central and Rodney Street;
- Rodney Street; and
- If necessary, the fast lane of Garden Road flyover.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the special traffic arrangements will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of the traffic arrangements will be made depending on traffic and crowd conditions in the areas. Motorists are advised to exercise tolerance and patience and take heed of instructions of the Police on site.

Postal services to Japan subject to delay

Hongkong Post announced today (September 7) that, as advised by the postal administration of Japan, due to the impact of an earthquake, mail delivery services (including Speedpost, parcels and letter post items) to the Hokkaido region with postcodes from 04xxxxx to 09xxxxx are subject to delay.

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Policing Cooperation Forum

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Policing Cooperation Forum was held in Foshan city yesterday (September 6). Led by the Commissioner of Police, Mr Lo Wai-chung, representatives of the Hong Kong Police Force met with the Guangdong and Macao delegations respectively headed by the Director of Guangdong Provincial Public Security Department (GD PSD), Mr Li Chun-sheng, and the Secretary for Security of Macao, Mr Wong Sio-chak. After the Forum, Mr Lo officiated at the prize presentation cum closing ceremony of the 18th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Police and Security Forces Sports Exchange.

At the Forum, representatives from the three places discuss the establishment of a Greater Bay Area police cooperation mechanism, as well as issues on combating cross-boundary crime, mounting joint operations and organising police training programmes.

The Hong Kong delegation included Director of Personnel and Training, Mr Li Kin-fai, Director of Management Services, Mr Kwok Yam-shu and Director of Crime and Security, Mr Li Chi-hang. The Mainland delegates came from GD PSD and Public Security Bureaux of nine cities included in the Greater Bay Area project. The Macao delegates were from the Office of the Secretary for Security, Unitary Police Service, Customs Service, Public Security Forces Affairs Bureau, Public Security Police, Judiciary Police and Fire Services Bureau.

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao police have been in close cooperation for years. In the course of developing the Greater Bay Area, the Hong Kong Police Force will continue to closely liaise with Guangdong and Macao counterparts and join hands in combating cross-boundary criminal activities.

The delegation returned to Hong Kong this afternoon (September 7).

Red tide sighted

A red tide has been sighted over the past week, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (September 7).

The red tide was spotted by staff of the Environmental Protection Department on September 4 in the Shing Mun River channel near Sha Tin Park.

The red tide has dissipated. No associated death of fish has been reported.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The red tide was formed by *Cyclotella choctawhatcheeana*, which is commonly found in Hong Kong waters and is non-toxic."

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) urged mariculturists at 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.