

Thirty-four immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations, including an operation codenamed "Twilight" and a joint operation with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Labour Department codenamed "Champion", from May 7 to 10. A total of 28 illegal workers and six suspected employers were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 21 target locations including carparks, restaurants, a company, street stalls, a market, warehouses and residential flats. Twenty-one illegal workers and five employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised 16 men and five women, aged 21 to 54. Among them, eight men and two women were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. Furthermore, five men and four women were also suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Meanwhile, four men and a woman, aged 38 to 58, were suspected of employing the illegal workers.

Furthermore, during operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 39 target locations in Aberdeen, Kwai Chung, Tsing Yi and Mongkok district including food stalls, shops, an industrial building, a massage parlour, street stalls, residential flats, a vegetable stall, restaurants and warehouses. Seven illegal workers and one employer were arrested. The illegal workers comprised four men and three women, aged 30 to 61. Among them, one man was also suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Meanwhile, a woman, aged 52, was 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.

The spokesman also warned that 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.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, May 11, 2018 is 99 (down 0.3 against yesterday's index).

High-Level Meeting cum First Plenary

of the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference held in Sichuan (with photo)

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Sichuan Provincial People's Government held the high-level meeting cum First Plenary of the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference (the meeting cum plenary) today (May 11) in Chengdu, Sichuan. The meeting cum plenary established a new co-operation mechanism as a platform for the multifaceted co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan.

The meeting cum plenary was led by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mrs Carrie Lam, and the Secretary of the CPC Sichuan Provincial Committee, Mr Peng Qinghua. The Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Zhang Xiaoming, and the Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Mr Wang Zhimin, also attended the meeting cum plenary as special guests.

At the meeting, both sides agreed to establish the Hong Kong-Sichuan Co-operation Conference. Plenaries of the Conference would be jointly convened from time to time as necessary by the Chief Secretary for Administration of the HKSAR Government and the Vice-Governor of the Sichuan Provincial People's Government responsible for Hong Kong and Macao affairs.

"Exchanges between Hong Kong and Sichuan have always been close. Through the HKSAR's participation in the reconstruction work after the massive May 12 Wenchuan earthquake 10 years ago, a solid foundation has been laid down for the co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the reform and opening up of China and the 10th anniversary of the massive Wenchuan earthquake. It is especially meaningful to enhance our co-operation with Sichuan at this special juncture," Mrs Lam said.

Hong Kong and Sichuan reached consensus on the following 11 co-operation areas:

The Belt and Road Initiative and economic and trade fronts

To jointly promote strategic partnership between enterprises of the two places for collaborative participation in the Belt and Road Initiative. The HKSAR Government will invite Sichuan Province to join the third Belt and Road Summit in Hong Kong in June 2018. Sichuan enterprises will be invited to participate in investment and business matching sessions and one-to-one business matching meetings, with a view to facilitating co-operation between Hong Kong and Sichuan enterprises in seeking out opportunities related to the Belt and Road Initiative.

The HKSAR Government will organise various types of investment promotion

events, such as seminars, in Chengdu and the other major cities in Sichuan Province, to promote Hong Kong's unique advantages as an international financial centre, with a view to attracting Sichuan enterprises to make use of Hong Kong as an investment platform and to jointly capitalise on the opportunities brought about by the Belt and Road Initiative.

Cultural and creative industries

The Chengdu Management Committee of the Tianfu New Area of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, the Hong Kong Federation of Design Associations and other participating parties have signed a Strategic Co-operation Framework Agreement to take forward the Hong Kong-Sichuan Design and Innovation Hub project. The goal is to construct a platform for in-depth co-operation, with culture and creativity at its core, and design, music and film/TV as extensions.

Hong Kong and Sichuan will enhance cultural exchange in the art form of Xiqu. The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority will send a delegation to Sichuan to study the development of Sichuan opera. The HKSAR Government will also invite operatic troupes from Sichuan Province to participate in the Chinese Opera Festival in Hong Kong when appropriate opportunities arise.

Innovation and technology

To encourage exchange and co-operation in innovation and technology among universities and research and development (R&D) institutions of the two places, including the joint establishment of incubation bases, R&D centres and technology transfer platforms. The HKSAR Government will encourage the supporting organisations of Hong Kong technology start-ups to strengthen exchanges with the relevant organisations in Sichuan Province, with a view to promoting the development of new and advanced technologies and the related industries of the two places.

Finance

To encourage Sichuan enterprises which meet the relevant requirements to "go global" using Hong Kong's financial platforms, including cross-boundary listing, bond issuance, merger and acquisition, risk management, and the establishment of corporate treasury centres in Hong Kong. To encourage Sichuan enterprises which meet the relevant requirements to finance green projects through the capital market of Hong Kong, including the issuance of green bonds in Hong Kong.

Youth development

To jointly promote co-operation in youth exchange. Under the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland and the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland, the HKSAR Government will provide funding support

to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of Hong Kong to organise exchange and internship programmes in Sichuan for young people of Hong Kong. The Sichuan Provincial People's Government plans to invite young people of Hong Kong to visit Sichuan through the HKSAR Government's funding schemes under the framework of "Ba-Shu Cultural Exchange for Young People of Hong Kong", with a view to providing opportunities for them to experience the local customs and learn about the new developments of Sichuan, thereby fostering youth exchange of the two places.

The HKSAR Government will continue to organise and enhance the Youth Internship Programme at Wolong National Nature Reserve in the summer of 2018.

Building and construction

The two places will continue to co-organise exchange programmes for construction-related professionals from Sichuan to receive short-term training in Hong Kong.

Education

To continue to promote the pairing up of sister primary and secondary schools, and the co-operation between higher education institutions of the two places. To overcome the constraint of physical distance, the HKSAR Government will set up an online platform for sister schools to facilitate exchanges.

To strengthen the co-operation in vocational education of the two places, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Department of Education of Sichuan Province will enhance co-operation in curriculum development, teacher training, internship and career development for students, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship. The VTC would also co-operate with the Sichuan Vocational and Technical College of Communications in drawing up a talent development programme for railway engineering professionals. The two parties will explore the use of digitalised teaching materials for vocational training, and further co-operate in curriculum development.

Chinese medicine and food safety

To step up co-operation in Chinese medicine, including enhancing academic exchanges, experience-sharing in Chinese hospital development and clinical services, promoting co-operation in research of Chinese medicine testing and standards, conducting meetings from time to time to foster exchange of talents and knowledge, and to jointly promote the internationalisation of Chinese medicine.

To further step up co-operation in food safety between the two places through exchanges on risk management and standards, co-operation in testing technologies, the creation of synergy in emergency management and the establishment of a reciprocal visit and exchange system.

Tourism

To forge co-operation in multi-destination tourism and join hands to conduct activities including publicity and promotion, business matching and familiarisation visits.

Airport and railway construction and management

The MTR Corporation Limited is discussing with the Chengdu Rail Transit Group the co-operation model for the construction and management of the Chengdu metro, property development and the training of railway professionals. The two parties have signed a Memorandum of Co-operation, and will set up a working group to study the feasibility of joint property development above the stations along the rail lines in Chengdu.

The Airport Authority Hong Kong and the Sichuan Airport Group will strengthen exchanges among aviation professionals. The Hong Kong International Aviation Academy and the Sichuan Airport Group will jointly formulate the 2018 airport operations and management training proposal. The Sichuan Airport Group will also send its staff to join the courses conducted by the Academy in Hong Kong.

Facilitation measures for Hong Kong people

For the policy measures introduced by the relevant Central Government departments to facilitate Hong Kong people studying, working and living in the Mainland (facilitation measures), the Sichuan Provincial People's Government will ensure the smooth implementation of these measures at the local level, so as to allow Hong Kong people in Sichuan Province to enjoy the same treatment as Mainland residents in the areas of education, employment, setting up business and daily life matters. The Sichuan Provincial People's Government has rolled out a "one-stop" advisory services portal to serve Hong Kong people in Sichuan Province by providing information related to the facilitation measures and answering enquires.

Officials of the HKSAR Government accompanying the Chief Executive to attend the meeting cum plenary include the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong; and other representatives of the relevant bureaux and departments.



Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Sha Tin tomorrow

Police advise motorists that special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Sha Tin to facilitate the race meeting tomorrow (May 12).

The arrangements will come into effect two hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

Appropriate traffic signs will be put up and police will be on hand to guide motorists.

The Police also appeal to people going to Sha Tin Racecourse for the race meeting and to Happy Valley Racecourse for cross betting to make maximum use of public transport.

Parking spaces at the two racecourses are available only to holders of appropriate permits issued by Hong Kong Jockey Club and any vehicles illegally parked will be towed away.

EPD convictions in April

Ninety-one convictions were recorded in April 2018 for breaches of legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD).

Sixteen of the convictions were under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, 13 were under the Noise Control Ordinance, 61 were under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, and one was under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance.

The heaviest fine in April was \$60,000, assessed against a company which imported controlled waste without a permit.