

Missing man in Wong Tai Sin located

A man who went missing in Wong Tai Sin has been located.

Ho Hiu-pang, aged 28, went missing after he left his residence in Wang Tau Hom Estate on May 12 morning. His family made a report to Police on the same day.

The man returned to his residence this afternoon (May 14). He sustained no injuries and no suspicious circumstances were detected.

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

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide enforcement operation codenamed "Silver Wing" yesterday (May 13) to combat violations by imported workers. During the operation, four imported workers, suspected of performing duties at non-contractual homes for the elderly, were arrested. Three persons-in-charge of the homes for the elderly concerned were also arrested.

The ImmD received a report earlier about several homes for the elderly where imported workers were illegally deployed for duties. After an in-depth investigation and intelligence analysis, the ImmD officers initiated the operation yesterday and arrested the abovementioned four imported workers and the three persons-in-charge of the homes for the elderly. The arrested imported workers comprised one man and three women, aged 32 to 52, who were suspected of breaching their conditions of stay by performing duties at non-contractual homes for the elderly. The arrested persons-in-charge of the homes for the elderly comprised three women, aged 42 to 65, who were suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached their condition of stay in Hong Kong.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him shall be guilty of an offence. Also, after entry into the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the imported worker admitted on an employment condition must remain under the direct employment of the same employer for the specified job and in the specific workplace(s) as stipulated in the Standard Employment Contract and cannot be employed by other companies or subcontractors. Change of the employer, post or place of work (unless stipulated in the Standard Employment Contract) is not permitted. 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 reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. Under the Immigration Ordinance, the maximum penalty for an employer employing a person who is not lawfully employable, i.e. an illegal immigrant, a person who is the subject of a removal order or a deportation order, an overstayer or a person who was refused permission to land, has been significantly increased from a fine of \$350,000 and three years' imprisonment to a fine of \$500,000 and 10 years' imprisonment to reflect the gravity of such offences. The director, manager, secretary, partner, etc, of the company concerned may also bear criminal liability. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence.



[Murder and suicide in Kwai Chung](#)

Police are investigating a murder and suicide case in Kwai Chung yesterday (May 13) in which a woman and a man died.

At 11.56am yesterday, Police received a report from a woman that she suspected her 58-year-old younger sister and 32-year-old nephew committed suicide by burning charcoal in a unit in Kwai Yan House, Kwai Fong Estate. Officers attended the scene and found the woman and the man collapsed in a bedroom. A basin of burnt charcoal was found next to them. They were certified dead at scene.

A will note in suspected connection with the case was seized at scene. Post-mortem examinations will be conducted later to ascertain the cause of their death.

Active investigation by the District Crime Squad of Kwai Tsing District

is underway. Police appeal to anyone who has information related to the case to contact the investigating officers on 3661 2934.

Man sentenced for illegal possession of alternative smoking products and Part 1 poison

A 28-year-old man was sentenced to 160 hours' community service order at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (May 14) for illegal possession of alternative smoking products (ASPs) and Part 1 poison.

On December 20, 2022, the Police found the man involved in the case transporting ASPs using a lorry parked near Ping Yeung Chuen, Fanling. Over 50 000 pieces of nicotine-containing electronic cigarette product were found inside the lorry. The case was referred to the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) for further investigation.

The Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) prohibits the promotion, manufacture, sale and possession for commercial purposes of ASPs. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138), nicotine (except tobacco) is listed as a Part 1 poison, which can only be sold at pharmacies under the supervision of registered pharmacists. Illegal sale or possession of Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

Since the ban on ASPs came into effect on April 30, 2022, the TACO has issued 635 summonses to offenders for importing ASPs, resulting in 353 convicted cases with fines up to \$24,000 as at March 31, 2024. Over the same period, the TACO has issued 18 summonses to offenders for suspected sale or possession for commercial purposes of ASPs, of which 11 cases (involving 17 summonses) were convicted with a maximum penalty of two months' imprisonment.

A spokesman for the DH said that the department will continue to take stringent enforcement action. The spokesman also cautioned against the use of any ASPs and stressed that these products contain amounts of nicotine similar to those of conventional cigarettes in order to sustain addiction. In addition, health hazards of long-term exposure to these new products are unknown. The Government appeals to smokers to quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. They are encouraged to call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183. The hotline is operated by registered nurses and provides professional counselling services

on smoking cessation. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk/en/index.html.

Executive Council approves taxi fare adjustments

The Chief Executive in Council approved today (May 14) adjustments to the urban, New Territories (NT) and Lantau taxi fares, with increases of \$2 in flagfall charge, \$0.2 in the incremental charge for the first-tier distance after flagfall, and \$0.1 in the incremental charge for the second-tier distance after flagfall. Details of the new fares are as follows:

| | Flagfall charge for the first 2 kilometres or any part thereof | | |
|---------------|--|----------|--------------|
| | Urban taxis | NT taxis | Lantau taxis |
| Existing fare | \$27 | \$23.5 | \$22 |
| New fare | \$29 | \$25.5 | \$24 |

| | Incremental charge for each 200 metres travelled after flagfall | | |
|---------------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| | Urban taxis | NT taxis | Lantau taxis |
| First-tier distance | 2-9km | 2-8km | 2-20km |
| Existing fare | \$1.9 per jump | \$1.7 per jump | \$1.7 per jump |
| New fare | \$2.1 per jump | \$1.9 per jump | \$1.9 per jump |

| | after 9km | after 8km | after 20km |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Existing fare | \$1.3 per jump | \$1.3 per jump | \$1.5 per jump |
| New fare | \$1.4 per jump | \$1.4 per jump | \$1.6 per jump |

There will be corresponding adjustments to the charge for the waiting time as a result of the increase in incremental charges after flagfall, while the other additional charges will remain unchanged.

"Taxis provide personalised point-to-point public transport service to the general public. In recent years, there have been calls from both the community and the taxi trade for the Government to implement initiatives to enhance the quality and sustainability of taxi services. In view of the above, the Government had earlier on reviewed the overall taxi operation and management, and launched a series of measures with a view to enhancing the quality of taxi services and promoting the development of the taxi industry.

Such measures include introducing a taxi fleet regime, increasing the maximum passenger seating capacity of taxis from five to six, and introducing a Taxi-Driver-Offence Points System and a two-tier penalty system for certain taxi-driver-related offences. Following the passage of the relevant legislative amendments by the Legislative Council (LegCo) in December last year, the aforementioned measures are being implemented progressively with a view to enhancing service quality and the overall image of the taxi trade. Apart from these measures, it is also important to review the taxi fares and the financial viability of taxi operation at appropriate junctures in order to ensure the healthy development of the taxi trade in the long run and maintain a stable supply of taxi services to cater for passengers' needs," a spokesman for the Transport and Logistics Bureau said.

Among the series of measures mentioned above, the taxi fleet regime is a new regulatory regime. Under the taxi fleet regime, the Transport Department (TD) will issue Taxi Fleet Licences and regulate the operation and management of taxi fleets through licensing conditions, including the requirements in relation to fleet size, age of vehicles and services to be provided by fleet licensees, such as the provision of online booking channels (including mobile applications and websites) and e-payment means, as well as the installation of CCTV systems and technological devices to enhance driving safety inside the compartments. The TD has issued the invitation for applications for Taxi Fleet Licences on April 12 with a view to announcing the results in mid-2024. Taking into account the time needed for setting up a taxi fleet, the TD will require taxi fleet operators to commence operation in not more than 12 months after the grant of Taxi Fleet Licences (i.e. no later than mid-2025). The Government will encourage and assist the trade to form taxi fleets and commence operation as early as practicable.

Regarding taxi fare increase applications, the urban, NT and Lantau taxi trades reached a consensus on their respective fare increase applications in March 2023 for increasing the flagfall charge by \$5, \$4.5 and \$6 respectively, the incremental charges for the first-tier distance after flagfall by \$0.2, \$0.2 and \$0.1 respectively, and the incremental charges for the second-tier distance after flagfall by \$0.2. The urban taxi trade also asked for shortening the waiting time of a hired taxi not in motion from 60 seconds to 45 seconds per jump. In addition, the urban and NT taxi trades applied for an increase in additional fare of \$1 for every article of baggage carried and \$2 for every animal or bird carried. As for the Lantau taxi trade, it applied for an increase in additional fare of \$2 for every article of baggage carried, \$3 for every animal or bird carried, and \$3 for every hiring arranged through telephone booking.

"According to the operating data, while the average monthly net income of urban and NT rentee-drivers in 2023 increased slightly as compared with the 2019 level after netting off inflation, Lantau rentee-drivers experienced a drop in their average monthly net income. As for owner-drivers and rentor-owners, their average monthly net income in 2023 dropped significantly as compared with that of 2019. As shown from the operating data, the taxi trade is facing genuine difficulty in maintaining the financial viability of its operation at the current taxi fare level. The taxi trade hopes that an

increase in taxi fares would raise the income of front-line drivers and attract more newcomers to join the industry, while at the same time encouraging taxi operators to improve their services and invest more in new facilities, thereby enhancing the overall taxi service quality and fostering the healthy development of the trade in the long run," the spokesman continued.

"The Government consulted the Panel on Transport of the LegCo and the Transport Advisory Committee in April 2024. A fare increase will inevitably lead to higher transportation expenses for passengers. In processing the current fare increase applications, the Government has duly considered various factors, including public acceptability, changes in taxi operating costs and income of taxi operators, as well as the fare differentials between taxis and other modes of public transport, and has struck a balance between maintaining the financial viability of taxi operation and public acceptability. Under the Government's recommendation, the average rates of fare increase are 8.86 per cent, 9.56 per cent and 10.92 per cent for urban, NT and Lantau taxis respectively, with a weighted average rate of increase of 8.98 per cent, which is lower than the rate of increase under the trade's proposal," the spokesman said.

The Government will table the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulation 2024 at the LegCo on May 22, 2024, for negative vetting in order to adjust the taxi fares. Upon completion of the procedure, the new fares are expected to take effect from July 14, 2024.