

# Immigration Department smashes syndicate for using false instruments to apply for foreign domestic helper working visas

A syndicate mastermind was convicted of four counts of conspiracy to defraud and two counts of using a copy of a false instrument, and was sentenced to a total of 41 months' imprisonment today (July 3). The syndicate mastermind was a 63-year-old Hong Kong resident female who was a foreign domestic helper (FDH) employment agent. One Hong Kong male resident and six FDHs involved in the case had been convicted earlier for offences such as conspiracy to defraud, making false representation to an immigration officer etc, and were sentenced to up to 15 months' imprisonment.

Upon processing FDH visa applications, the Immigration Department (ImmD) detected several suspicious FDH visa applications which were previously submitted through the said employment agent. An investigation of the employment agent was therefore triggered. After a months-long in-depth investigation and intelligence analysis, a syndicate was identified, which was suspected to have arranged for 26 foreign nationals to work in Hong Kong illegally through the use of false FDH contracts.

The ImmD subsequently mounted operations codenamed "Ironshield". During the operation, a total of 18 persons, including the syndicate mastermind, three Hong Kong residents and 14 FDHs, have been arrested. In addition, two computers, two mobile phones and a considerable amount of false instruments were seized, including time deposit advices, electricity bills and water bills. More suspects could be arrested as the investigation is continuing.

"It is an offence to make a false representation to an immigration officer. Offenders are liable to prosecution and to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. In addition, anyone who commits the offence of conspiracy to defraud is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, the maximum penalty is imprisonment for 14 years. Furthermore, it is an offence to make, possess or use false instruments. Upon conviction, offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment," an ImmD spokesman said.