

## SB sets up dedicated task force on employment fraud in Southeast Asian countries (with photos)

The Security Bureau (SB) today (August 18) announced that it attaches great importance to recent incidents in which Hong Kong people were suspected to have been lured to Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos and detained to engage in illegal work. In this regard, the SB has set up a dedicated task force to co-ordinate follow-up action by the relevant law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in providing all possible help to assistance seekers. Members of the Task Force include representatives from the SB, the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF).

Since January this year, LEAs of Hong Kong (including the ImmD and the HKPF) have received requests for assistance in relation to 20 Hong Kong people in total. According to the information gathered by LEAs, among them, 12 Hong Kong people are confirmed to be safe and 10 of those people have returned to Hong Kong.

The Task Force will actively follow up on requests for assistance, and maintain close contact with family members of the people concerned, the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the local Chinese Embassy/Consulate General and INTERPOL to follow up on the cases. The Task Force will provide assistance to secure the safe return of the people concerned to Hong Kong, including the quarantine arrangements in Hong Kong.

The Organized Crime and Triad Bureau of the HKPF has taken up the investigation of relevant cases, and has been maintaining close liaison with enforcement agencies in other jurisdictions, and contacted overseas LEAs in relation to the exchange of intelligence and assistance in investigations through the INTERPOL platform.

The Government appeals to the public not to trust online recruitment advertisements or comments lightly and guard against claims of ways to earn quick money and jobs offering extraordinarily high remuneration with no specific requirements for academic qualification or working experience.

In light of the local situation, the SB has issued since 2012 an amber outbound travel alert on Myanmar to remind residents who intend to visit the country or are already there to monitor the situation, exercise caution, and attend to their personal safety. Residents should also avoid all non-essential travel to the northern and western states of Myanmar and areas along the border with Mainland China, Laos and Thailand. With regard to recent cases, the SB has included alerts on overseas job scams in the "Other Travel Information" section on the website for Outbound Travel Alerts. Starting today, the HKPF and the ImmD will distribute flyers at the

boarding counters of outbound flights to the relevant Southeast Asian countries to remind outbound travellers to beware of employment scams and pay attention to travel safety.

Hong Kong residents travelling outside Hong Kong who need assistance may call the 24-hour hotline of the Assistance to Hong Kong Residents Unit of the Immigration Department at (852) 1868, call the 1868 hotline by network data call via the Immigration Department Mobile Application or submit the Online Assistance Request Form. Citizens should make a report to the Police as soon as practicable if a scam is suspected.

