

## 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.

