

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

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" and "Windsand" for four consecutive days from January 29 to yesterday (February 1). A total of 24 suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 21 target locations including premises under renovation, a recycling yard, restaurants, and a retail shop. Nineteen suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised 14 men and five women, aged 25 to 65. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. One man, aged 42, was suspected of employing the illegal workers and was also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 77 target locations in Central district. Five suspected illegal workers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised four men and one woman, aged 28 to 55.

An ImmD spokesman said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him or her 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."

The spokesman warned, "As stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, 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 is 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 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.

According to the 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. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and to imprisonment for one year. In that connection, the spokesman would like to remind all employers not to defy the law by employing illegal workers. The ImmD will continue to take resolute enforcement action to combat such offences.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct an 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 ImmD officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threats 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 intervention, medical services, counselling, shelter or temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



[Dancing dragon lantern display opens today at Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza to ring in New Year with public](#)

(with photos)

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) is presenting the Lunar New Year Lantern Display "Dancing Dragon with Lanterns to Greet the New Year" at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza from today (February 2) until February 25 to ring in the Year of the Dragon with the public and boost the city's festive atmosphere. The lanterns will be illuminated from 6pm to 11pm daily.

To bring in the New Year, the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Office and local paper-crafting master Chan Yiu-wah collaborated to design and craft lanterns featuring the green dragon, which symbolises the vitality of spring, as the main design element. The green dragon, weaving through palace lanterns and amid blooming festive flowers, brings forth a vibrant and colourful scene and sends a common wish that Hong Kong will remain prosperous upon the arrival of the Year of the Dragon. Both dragon dance and paper crafting are Hong Kong's intangible cultural heritage items. Members of the public can experience the vibrancy of these ICH items through the exquisite paper-crafting techniques of the master.

In addition to the above lantern display, the LCSD will also hold lantern carnivals at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Piazza, Hong Kong Velodrome Park, Tin Shui Wai Park and Ginza Square from February 20 to 25. During the carnivals, members of the public can appreciate spectacular lanterns with different themes and participate in lantern night events held on specific dates. The events offer a wide range of activities such as music and dance performances, acrobatics, magic performance, lantern riddles and more. More details will be announced later.

For enquiries, please call 2591 1340 or visit the event webpage at: www.cpo.gov.hk/activity/en-lunar-new-year-lantern-carnivals-2024-ld/





[Public should take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning](#)

In view of the recent increase in carbon monoxide poisoning cases while taking showers, the Government today (February 2) appealed to members of the public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning and take note of the [Safety Message of Domestic Gas Water Heater](#) of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD).

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health received a notification of an additional case involving a 59-year-old man, who was found unconscious when he had a shower in the bathroom of his home on January 30. He was sent to Pok Oi Hospital and was later transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for treatment. He is now in stable condition.

A site investigation by the EMSD discovered that the subject gas water heater is of a flueless type and should not be used in bathrooms. The model concerned has not been approved by the EMSD and did not bear a "GU" mark. It is preliminarily suspected that the exhaust flue gas generated by the gas water heater without flue was discharged into the bathroom, coupled with poor ventilation, carbon monoxide accumulated due to insufficient oxygen for combustion and thus led to the carbon monoxide poisoning. The EMSD has seized the subject gas water heater for further investigation. If the investigation results confirm that there was a contravention of the Gas Safety Ordinance, the EMSD will consider initiating prosecution action against the person concerned.

The EMSD reiterated that using unsafe gas appliances imposes significant safety risks. When a flueless gas water heater is used in a room with inadequate ventilation, a large amount of carbon monoxide may be built up within a short time. Pursuant to the Gas Safety Ordinance, flueless gas water heaters are not allowed to be installed to serve a bathroom in Hong Kong.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas which is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel which contains carbon, such as wood, natural gas and gasoline. Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, a headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death.

The CHP and the EMSD reminded members of the public that gas water heaters should be used in a well-ventilated area. They should seek medical attention immediately if suspected of developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The EMSD reminded members of the public of the following:

1. Occupants should buy and use a gas water heater which has been approved by the EMSD and bears a "GU" mark;
 2. All installations, replacements or repair work on gas water heaters must be carried out by a registered gas installer employed by a registered gas contractor. Otherwise, it would be liable to contravention of the Gas Safety Ordinance and offenders are liable to prosecution;
 3. Gas appliances including gas water heaters and gas cookers should be used in well-ventilated areas, helped by switching on extraction fans and not closing all windows and doors; and
 4. Occupants should arrange a regular safety inspection of a gas water heater every 18 months by a registered gas contractor. If the gas water heater has incurred damage or abnormalities during operation, please stop using it immediately and contact the registered gas supply company.
-

[Complaints Watch Issue No. 23](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) published today (February 2) the Complaints Watch Issue No. 23, which highlights the latest banking complaint trends, emerging topical issues, and areas that Authorized Institutions (AIs) and members of the public may be alert to. It aims at promoting proper standards of conduct and prudent business practices among AIs as well as fostering financial consumer education.

This issue of Complaints Watch contains two feature articles "E-communication with customers" and "Reporting of conduct incidents". In addition, some tips are shared with banks' complaint handling officers on "Use of Data and Technology".

The [Complaints Watch](#) is available on the HKMA website.

[Senior appointment at Hong Kong Monetary Authority](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (February 2) that the Financial Secretary, on the advice of the Governance Sub-Committee of the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee, has approved the appointment of Mr Archie Ng as Executive Director (Corporate Services) with effect from February 14, 2024. Mr Ng will succeed Mr Donald Chen who has taken over the role of Executive Director (Banking Policy) since December 2023.

As Executive Director (Corporate Services), Mr Ng will be responsible for corporate development, media relations and public engagement, human resources, administration, finance, information technology and digitalisation work in the HKMA. The CV of Mr Ng is attached at Annex.