

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

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of 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 December 9 to yesterday (December 12). A total of 10 suspected illegal workers, three suspected employers and one suspected aider and abettor were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 13 target locations, including hotels, premises under renovation and restaurants. Two suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised one man and one woman, aged 38 and 41. One woman, aged 55, who was suspected of employing the illegal workers, was arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 24 target locations in Eastern and Western districts. Eight suspected illegal workers, two suspected employers and one suspected aider and abettor were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised five men and three women, aged 29 to 57. Among them, two men and one woman were suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Two men, aged 29 and 41, who were suspected of employing the illegal workers, were arrested. One man, aged 65, who was suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached the condition of stay in Hong Kong, was arrested. Among them, two suspected illegal workers and one suspected aider and abettor were handled by the ImmD.

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. Under the prevailing laws, it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or a Hong Kong identity card related to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and upon conviction face a maximum fine of \$100,000 and up to 10 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.



[SWD investigates suspected reselling of short-term food assistance](#)

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) said today (December 13) that, following a recent round of cyber patrols on various online trading platforms, the department has found that some service users are suspected of reselling hot meal coupons provided by the Short-term Food Assistance Service Teams (STFASTs). The relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) responsible for operating the STFASTs have reported the cases to the Police.

Eight STFASTs in Hong Kong provide basic short-term food assistance to help individuals and families facing immediate financial hardship cope with their daily food expenditures. The SWD emphasised that short-term food assistance is not transferable and cannot be resold or exchanged for money or other items. Should any irregularity or deception be found, the SWD will show no tolerance or leniency. Apart from immediately terminating the food assistance for the service users, the case will be referred to law enforcement authorities for investigation.

The SWD has requested all operating NGOs to seriously remind their users about the service terms. The NGOs will continue to vigilantly check the usage of food coupons to ensure the proper use of public money.

[Senior staff movement 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 (December 13) that the Executive Director (Research), Ms Lillian Cheung, will leave the HKMA on resignation for personal reason in May 2025.

Commenting on Ms Cheung's resignation, the Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Eddie Yue, said, "I would like to thank Lillian for her dedicated service and contributions to the HKMA's work over the years. My colleagues and I wish her all the best in her new journey."

The HKMA will arrange an open recruitment for the post of Executive Director (Research). A separate announcement will be made after the completion of the selection process.

Government announces subscription and allocation results of retail infrastructure bond

The Government announced today (December 13) the subscription and allocation results of the retail infrastructure bond.

According to the subscription information submitted by placing banks and the Hong Kong Securities Clearing Company Limited (HKSCC), as at the close of the subscription period at 2pm on December 6, 2024, 127 594 valid applications were received for a total of HK\$17,776,530,000 in principal amount of bonds.

A breakdown of valid applications is as follows –

	Total number of valid applications	Total amount of valid applications (HK\$)
Placing banks	118 935	16,960,700,000
HKSCC (including the subscription applications made through securities brokers)	8 659	815,830,000
Total	127 594	17,776,530,000

Allocation is conducted in accordance with the mechanism set out in the Issue Circular dated November 26, 2024. All applications for 100 or fewer lots have been allocated the full amounts applied for, while applications for more than 100 lots have been allocated the maximum principal allocation amount of 100 lots. The final issuance amount of the retail infrastructure bond is HK\$17,730,350,000.

The retail infrastructure bond will be issued on December 17, 2024, and listed on the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong on December 18, 2024. Notifications on individual allocation results, applicable subscription moneys and amounts of any refund of application moneys will be made by the placing banks and the HKSCC in accordance with the schedule set out in the Issue Circular.

CHP announces one new confirmed melioidosis infection case over past week

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 13) said that one new confirmed melioidosis infection case had been recorded in the past week (December 6 to 12).

The case involves a 63-year-old male with underlying illnesses who lived in Sham Shui Po. He attended Caritas Medical Centre after developing fever and shortness of breath on November 30 and was admitted on the same day. His clinical sample was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing. The patient died of his underlying illness on December 4.

The CHP is investigating the infection source of the case. Epidemiological investigations are ongoing. So far, 23 melioidosis infection cases have been recorded in Hong Kong this year. In 2023, 17 melioidosis infection cases were recorded.

A spokesman for the CHP stressed that person-to-person transmission and animal-to-human transmission are rare, but melioidosis bacteria can survive in the local environment. Melioidosis is an endemic disease in Hong Kong and melioidosis cases have been recorded in Hong Kong each year.

According to literature, infection cases are more common after typhoons or storms. The bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei* of melioidosis in soil and muddy water may become exposed to the ground after typhoons or storms, and the bacteria could spread more easily with strong winds or storms. As such, the number of melioidosis cases may increase.

With this in mind, the spokesman reminded members of the public that, where practicable, people should stay indoors during typhoons and storms, avoid travelling to areas with potential flooding, and do not wade in or have contact with muddy water and soil. In addition, high-risk individuals should avoid paths near stormwater drains where aerosols may be generated from contaminated water.

Members of the public should also take the following preventive measures against infection:

- Avoid contact with contaminated soil;
- Wear appropriate protective clothing or footwear when participating in activities with possible contact with soil or water, e.g. using gloves and wearing boots. High-risk individuals may also consider wearing a surgical mask;
- Wash or shower after exposure to contaminated water or soil;
- Always clean any wounds as soon as possible and cover any cuts or grazes

with waterproof dressings;

- Wash hands with liquid soap and water after handling soil or gardening;
- Observe food hygiene and avoid drinking raw water; and
- Travellers can contract the disease through outdoor water sports. Risk of infection can be minimised by avoiding exposure to water sources (such as rivers, ponds or lakes) that might be contaminated.

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â€‹The CHP appealed to members of the public to seek medical advice if they develop symptoms, in particular people with diabetes or other immunocompromised conditions, in order to receive an appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment. For more information on melioidosis, please visit the website of the CHP

at www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/101110.html.