

CFS conducts blitz enforcement operation against food labelling irregularities (with photo)

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (June 21) that the CFS conducted a blitz operation against irregularities in the labelling of prepackaged food products on June 19. During the operation, CFS officers found that prepackaged food products not in compliance with food labelling laws in Hong Kong were sold at a collection point of an online platform, which was suspected of contravening the requirements under the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations (Cap. 132W) (the Regulations). Should there be sufficient evidence, prosecution will be instituted against the vendor concerned. The investigation is ongoing.

A spokesman for the CFS said that it will continue to monitor and ensure compliance of relevant food safety and labelling laws of prepackaged food products for sale in Hong Kong, including food products sold by online platforms.

According to the Regulations, unless exempted in Schedule four and six of the Regulations or otherwise stated, prepackaged food shall be marked and labelled in the manner prescribed in the Regulations. Any person who advertises for sale, sells or manufactures for sale any prepackaged food which is not marked or labelled in compliance with the Regulations commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months upon conviction.

The spokesman reminded members of the public to patronise licensed food premises and online shops with appropriate permits when purchasing restricted food, and pay attention to the potential food safety risks when purchasing food online. The CFS has also published advice for food businesses and consumers on online grocery shopping and delivery, which is accessible at the CFS website (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/food_leg/guidelines/Online_Grocery_Trade_e.pdf).



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

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a series of territory-wide anti-illegal worker operations codenamed "Contribute" and "Twilight", and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion", "Powerplayer" and "Windsand", for four consecutive days from June 17 to yesterday (June 20). A total of 16 suspected illegal workers, three suspected employers, one suspected aider and abettor, three overstayers and four illegal immigrants were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 19 target locations including premises under renovation, restaurants and a retail shop. Seven suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised five men and two women, aged 23 to 44. Among the arrested persons, two men and one woman were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. One man, aged 63, was suspected of employing the illegal workers and was also arrested.

During operation "Champion" and "Powerplayer", enforcement officers raided 118 target locations in Eastern, New Territories North and Western districts. Nine suspected illegal workers, two suspected employers, one suspected aider and abettor, three overstayers and four illegal immigrants were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised six men and three women, aged 27 to 59. Two men, aged 48 and 64, were suspected of employing the illegal workers, were arrested. One man, aged 73, who was suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached the condition of stay in Hong Kong, was arrested. The arrested overstayers comprised three women, aged 42 to 51. The arrested illegal immigrants comprised three men and one woman, aged 27 to 57. Among them, nine suspected illegal workers, two suspected employers, one suspected aider and abettor and two overstayers 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."

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 reminded 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.



[Correctional officers stop assault on person in custody](#)

â€‹Correctional officers stopped a person in custody from assaulting another person in custody at Pik Uk Prison today (June 21).

At 12.45pm today, a 36-year-old male person in custody attacked a 47-year-old male person in custody in a bathroom waiting area. Officers at the scene immediately stopped the assailant and called for reinforcement.

During the incident, the victim sustained injuries to his eyes and face, while the assailant sustained injury to his eyes. After examination and treatment by the institution Medical Officer, they were referred to a public hospital for further treatment.

The case has been reported to the Police for investigation.

The two persons in custody were sentenced to imprisonment for the offence of rape and trafficking in a dangerous drug in January and November 2023 respectively.

[Hong Kong Customs and Centre for Food](#)

Safety strengthen crackdowns on inbound persons illegally bringing regulated food into Hong Kong (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) stepped up enforcement from June 18 to 21 at various land boundary control points to crack down on inbound travellers illegally bringing regulated food into Hong Kong and to safeguard public health.

Customs and the CFS conducted joint law enforcement operations at the Lo Wu, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Shenzhen Bay and Heung Yuen Wai Control Points for four consecutive days from June 18 to 21, and deployed quarantine detector dogs to assist law enforcement officers in carrying out their duties. A total of 15 cases involving inbound persons illegally bringing regulated food including raw meat, poultry and eggs into Hong Kong were found during the operation. Prosecutions against the persons suspected of contravening the Imported Game, Meat, Poultry and Eggs Regulations (Cap. 132AK) will be instituted by the CFS.

Customs and the CFS will continue to maintain close liaison and exchange of intelligence, and step up enforcement operations and publicity and education, at various boundary control points to combat illegal food import activities. As of yesterday (June 20), the CFS had instituted 774 prosecutions against inbound persons for illegally bringing game, meat, poultry and eggs (regulated food) into Hong Kong this year.

Pursuant to Cap. 132AK, each consignment of imported game, meat, poultry and eggs, whether for personal use or not, must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by the issuing entity of the place of origin or written permission from the FEHD. Regulated food entering Hong Kong from the Mainland must be accompanied by a health certificate issued by Mainland Customs to prove that the food is from registered processing plants for supplying to Hong Kong recognised by the Mainland regulatory authority.

Customs and the CFS remind members of the public not to defy the law by importing regulated food without a recognised health certificate, written permission from the FEHD or import licence for the sake of convenience. Offenders are liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment under Cap. 132AK.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002).



[CHP investigates suspected ciguatera poisoning case](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (June 21) investigating a suspected ciguatera poisoning case affecting four persons.

The case involves four females aged between 17 and 77 who developed symptoms of ciguatera poisoning including limb weakness, numbness and diarrhoea about four to 15 hours after consuming fish on June 19 (affecting three persons) and 20 (affecting one person) at home. Three of them sought medical attention and two were admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital and Pok Oi Hospital for treatment. They are in stable condition.

Initial enquiries revealed that the fish consumed was bought from a fish stall at Po On Road market in Cheung Sha Wan on June 19.

Ciguatera fish poisoning is not uncommon in tropical areas. It is mainly associated with the consumption of large coral reef fish which have accumulated the toxin in the body, particularly in internal organs, through eating small fish that consumed toxic algae in seas around coral reefs.

A larger fish is therefore more likely to carry a higher amount of the

toxin. However, it is not easy to tell from the appearance of the fish whether it contains the toxin.

People affected may have symptoms of numbness of the mouth and limbs, vomiting, diarrhoea, alternating sensations of coldness and hotness, and pain in their joints and muscles.

"Most people affected by ciguatoxin will recover without long-term health effects, but if excessive toxins are consumed, the circulatory and nervous systems can be affected. The toxin cannot be destroyed by cooking," a spokesman for the CHP said.

To prevent ciguatera fish poisoning, the public should:

- Eat less coral reef fish;
- Eat small amounts of coral reef fish at any meal and avoid having a whole fish feast in which all dishes come from the same large coral reef fish;
- Avoid eating the head, skin, intestines and roe of coral reef fish, which usually have a higher concentration of toxins;
- When eating coral reef fish, avoid consuming alcohol, peanuts or beans as they may aggravate ciguatoxin poisoning;
- Seek medical treatment immediately should symptoms of ciguatoxin fish poisoning appear; and
- Coral reef fish should be purchased from reputable and licensed seafood shops. Do not buy the fish when the source is in doubt.