

# CHP announces one new confirmed melioidosis infection case over past week

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 7) said that one new confirmed melioidosis infection case had been recorded in the past week (May 31 to June 6).

The case involves a 65-year-old female with underlying illnesses who lives in Sham Shui Po. She started coughing since mid-May and attended the Caritas Medical Centre on May 28 due to worsening symptoms and a fever. She was admitted on the same day. She is in stable condition. Her clinical sample was confirmed positive for *Burkholderia pseudomallei* upon testing.

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

A spokesman for the CHP reiterated 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.

The CHP reminded members of the public that melioidosis can be spread by contaminated soil and water during and after typhoons and storms. 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.

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 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](http://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/24/101110.html).

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## **20 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", "Greenlane", "Lightshadow" and "Twilight", and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Windsand", for four consecutive days from June 3 to yesterday (June 6). A total of 18 suspected illegal workers and two suspected employers were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 69 target locations including commercial buildings, a football court, premises under renovation, residential buildings and restaurants. Eighteen suspected illegal workers and two suspected employers were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised 11 men and seven women, aged 29 to 51. Among them, three men and two women were holders of recognisance forms, which prohibit them from taking any employment. In addition, one woman was also suspected of using and being in possession of a forged Hong Kong identity card. Two men, aged 24 and 27, were suspected of employing the illegal workers and were also arrested.

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. 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.



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## Government to sell site in Sha Tin by public tender

The Lands Department (LandsD) announced today (June 7) that a site, Sha Tin Town Lot No. 623 at Yuen Shun Circuit, Siu Lek Yuen, Sha Tin, New Territories, in the 2024-25 Land Sale Programme, will be disposed of by public tender. The tender invitation for the lot will commence on June 14 and close on July 12.

Sha Tin Town Lot No. 623 has a site area of about 2 425 square metres and is designated for non-industrial (excluding godown, hotel and petrol filling station) purposes. The minimum gross floor area and the maximum gross floor area are 8 730 sq m and 14 550 sq m respectively. Both exclude the gross floor area of Government Accommodation, being a 60-place day care centre for the elderly, a centre for home care services for frail elderly persons and a lay-by, all to be constructed by the purchaser under the Conditions of Sale.

Land sale documents including the Form of Tender, the Tender Notice, the Conditions of Sale and the sale plan of the lot will be available for downloading from the LandsD website ([www.landsd.gov.hk](http://www.landsd.gov.hk)) from June 14, while the sale plan will be available for inspection by the public from the same day until the close of the tender. The sale plan in hard copy form may also be purchased at the Survey and Mapping Office of the LandsD, 6/F, North Point Government Offices, 333 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong, from June 14 until the close of the tender. The particulars of the tender will be gazetted on June 14.

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## Hong Kong Customs detects smuggling case involving about \$80 million of goods by ocean-going vessel (with photos)

Hong Kong Customs on June 4 detected a suspected case of using an ocean-going vessel to smuggle goods to Malaysia at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. A large batch of suspected smuggled electronic components and waste, with a total estimated market value of about \$80 million, was seized.

Through intelligence analysis and risk assessment, Customs discovered that criminals intended to use ocean-going vessels to smuggle goods and thus formulated strategies to combat related activities, and identified an ocean-going vessel preparing to depart from Hong Kong for Malaysia for inspection.

Customs officers on June 4 mounted an operation and seized a large batch of suspected smuggled goods, including integrated circuits, motherboards, capacitors and a batch of electronic waste, inside two containers, which were declared as containing aluminium materials and copper alloy respectively, aboard the vessel.

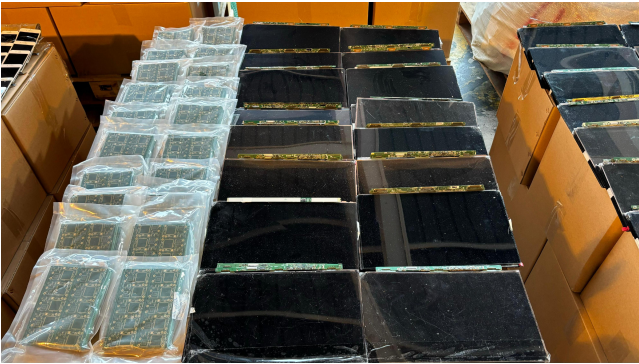
An investigation is ongoing. The likelihood of arrests is not ruled out.

Customs is the primary agency responsible for the suppression of smuggling activities and has long been combating various smuggling activities at the forefront. Customs will keep up its enforcement action and continue to fiercely combat sea smuggling activities through proactive risk management and intelligence-based enforcement strategies, along with mounting targeted anti-smuggling operations at suitable times to land a solid blow against relevant activities.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Under the Waste Disposal Ordinance, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without obtaining a valid permit beforehand. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

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](mailto:crimereport@customs.gov.hk)) or online form ([eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/](http://eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/)).



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## [12 landlords of subdivided units under regulated tenancies convicted of contravening relevant statutory requirements](#)

Twelve landlords of subdivided units (SDUs), who contravened Part IVA of the Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance (Cap. 7) (the Ordinance) pleaded guilty and were fined a total of \$31,600 today (June 7) at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts. Since the Ordinance has come into force, the Rating and Valuation Department (RVD) has successfully prosecuted 284 cases involving a total of 243 SDU landlords, with fines ranging from \$400 to \$18,600, amounting to a total of \$523,610.

The offences of these landlords include (1) failing to submit a Notice of Tenancy (Form AR2) to the Commissioner of Rating and Valuation within 60 days after the term of the regulated tenancy commenced; (2) failing to produce copies of the bills and provide an account in writing when requiring the tenant to pay for the reimbursement of the apportioned water and/or electricity charges; and (3) requesting the tenant to pay money other than the types permitted under the Ordinance. Two joint landlords were fined \$15,000 for having committed 30 offences under (1) and (3) above, including

requiring three tenants to pay waste disposal fees for a few months, etc.

The RVD earlier discovered that the landlords failed to comply with the relevant requirements under the Ordinance. Upon an in-depth investigation and evidence collection, the RVD prosecuted against the landlords.

A spokesman for the RVD reiterated that SDU landlords must comply with the relevant requirements under the Ordinance; and also reminded SDU tenants of their rights under the Ordinance. He also stressed that the RVD will continue to take resolute enforcement action against any contraventions of the Ordinance. Apart from following up on reported cases, the RVD has been adopting a multipronged approach to proactively identify, investigate and follow up on cases concerning landlords who are suspected of contravening the Ordinance. In particular, the RVD has been requiring landlords of regulated tenancies to provide information and reference documents of their tenancies for checking whether the landlords concerned have complied with the requirements of the Ordinance. If a landlord, without reasonable excuse, refuses to provide the relevant information or neglects the RVD's request, the landlord commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine at level 3 (\$10,000) and to imprisonment for three months. Depending on the actual circumstances, and having regard to the information and evidence collected, the RVD will take appropriate actions on individual cases, including instigating prosecution against suspected contraventions of the Ordinance.

To help curb illegal acts as soon as possible, members of the public should report to the RVD promptly any suspected cases of contravening the relevant requirements. Reporting can be made through the telephone hotline (2150 8303), by email ([enquiries@rvd.gov.hk](mailto:enquiries@rvd.gov.hk)), by fax (2116 4920), by post (15/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon), or in person (visiting the Tenancy Services Section office of the RVD at Room 3816-22, 38/F, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, and please call 2150 8303 to make an appointment). Furthermore, the RVD has provided a form (Form AR4) ([www.rvd.gov.hk/doc/en/forms/ar4.pdf](http://www.rvd.gov.hk/doc/en/forms/ar4.pdf)) on its website to facilitate SDU tenants' reporting to the RVD.

The RVD reminds that pursuant to the Ordinance, a regulated cycle of regulated tenancies is to comprise two consecutive regulated tenancies (i.e. the first-term tenancy and second-term tenancy) for an SDU, and the term of each regulated tenancy is two years. A tenant of a first-term tenancy for an SDU is entitled to be granted a second-term tenancy of the regulated cycle, thus enjoying a total of four years of security of tenure. Since the first batch of regulated tenancies has already approached their second-term tenancies, the RVD has started a new round of publicity and education work in order to assist SDU landlords and tenants to understand the important matters pertaining to the second-term tenancy, and procedures that need to be followed about two months prior to the commencement of the purported second-term tenancy. In addition, the RVD has started issuing letters enclosing relevant information to the concerned landlords and tenants of regulated tenancies in batches, according to the expiry time of their first-term tenancies, to remind them about their respective obligations and rights under the Ordinance. These landlords and tenants may also visit the dedicated page

for the second-term tenancy on the RVD's website ([www.rvd.gov.hk/en/tenancy\\_matters/second\\_term\\_tenancy.html](http://www.rvd.gov.hk/en/tenancy_matters/second_term_tenancy.html)) for the relevant information, including a concise guide, brochures, tutorial videos and frequently asked questions, etc. SDU landlords and tenants are also advised to familiarise themselves with the relevant statutory requirements and maintain close communication regarding the second-term tenancy for handling the matters properly and in a timely manner according to the Ordinance.

For enquiries related to regulated tenancies, please call the telephone hotline (2150 8303) or visit the RVD's webpage ([www.rvd.gov.hk/en/our\\_services/part\\_iva.html](http://www.rvd.gov.hk/en/our_services/part_iva.html)) for the relevant information.