

InvestHK strengthens economic ties between Hong Kong and MENA region (with photos)

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) announced today (November 26) that it has opened a new office in Cairo, Egypt, to enhance its effort in attracting companies from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to set up or expand their businesses in Hong Kong. It also aims to foster economic and business co-operation with the MENA region.

Attending the seventh HK International Egyptian Folklore and Oriental Dance Festival today, which is supported by the Consulate General of Egypt in Hong Kong, the Director-General of Investment Promotion at InvestHK, Ms Alpha Lau, said, "On this delightful occasion, I am happy to announce that InvestHK has opened a new Cairo office to foster closer economic ties between Hong Kong and Egypt."

She added, "We aim to support corporates in Egypt and the MENA region to establish their businesses in Hong Kong and to further strengthen the business and economic ties between Hong Kong and the MENA region. The opening of our first office in Cairo is a very significant step toward this goal. Corporates from Egypt and the MENA region can make use of Hong Kong as a perfect gateway to Asia and pave the way for a new horizon."

The Principal Consultant of the Cairo office at InvestHK, Mr Sherif El Bidewy, said, "We are honoured to be selected as the consultant of InvestHK in the region to attract local companies setting up or expanding in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has always been one of the most attractive business hubs in Asia and the world for its advanced infrastructure and enabling business environment. We will do our best to assist companies from Egypt and the MENA region to set up or expand in the city."

He added, "In fact, we already arranged a successful visit for the Head of Business and Professional Services at InvestHK, Mr Herman Tse, to Cairo and South Africa last month. It included meetings with various senior government officials and speaking at roundtables and events in the two places to promote Hong Kong as the leading destination for business and investment in the region."

The opening of the new office in Cairo is part of the plan mentioned in the 2024-25 Budget to strengthen Hong Kong's economic and trade relations with the Middle East.



[EPD welcomes Office of Ombudsman's direct investigation into issue of illegal disposal of construction waste](#)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (November 26) expressed its welcome for the announcement by the Office of the Ombudsman that it will launch a direct investigation into the Government's efforts to tackle illegal disposal of construction waste and related recycling service.

The EPD spokesman said that tackling illegal disposal of construction waste is one of the key enforcement tasks of the EPD. Since 2017, the department has implemented multi-pronged measures including the installation of surveillance camera systems, enhanced departmental collaboration, as well as strengthened law enforcement actions. As a result, the amount of construction waste illegally disposed of in the territory has significantly decreased by 90 per cent from about 9 000 tonnes from the start of action in 2017 to about 1 000 tonnes in 2023 (see Annex). The number of priority sites for tackling fly-tipping of construction waste has decreased from a previous peak of 86 to just eight recently. The most significant improvements have been seen in the Sham Shui Po district.

To further reduce illegal disposal of construction waste, the EPD has commenced a pilot scheme subsidised by the Recycling Fund and led by the trade for collecting and recycling construction waste from small-scale renovation work since 2021, which provides a construction waste collection service for small-scale renovation work of the renovation trade, thereby reducing at source illegal disposal of construction waste. Up to October 2024, the pilot scheme has provided more than 13 000 collection services and around 4 700 tonnes of construction waste have been collected. Should the above-mentioned service be not in place, a significant portion of the construction waste from the renovation work would probably have been disposed illegally.

The spokesperson said, "The EPD will fully assist with the Office of the Ombudsman's investigation, and we hope that constructive and cost-effective measures can be identified, thereby further improving the illegal construction waste disposal situation."

[Princess Margaret Hospital updates on cases concerning patient with hepatitis C infection](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on the case concerning two patients with hepatitis C infection, the spokesperson for Princess Margaret Hospital made the following update today (November 26):

Two male patients, aged 24 and 52, admitted to the same cubicle of high dependency unit of the Neurosurgery Department were tested positive with hepatitis C viral in late June. The hospital is very concerned about the cases and has been closely following up on the other 14 patients stayed in the same cubicle, including closely monitoring their clinical situations and conducting multiple hepatitis C viral tests. The results of the 14 patients' hepatitis C viral test have all along stayed negative. The hospital has also strengthened the infection control measures of the ward concerned, including enhanced surveillance and infection control training of hand hygiene, environmental cleansing and care procedures.

As a precautionary measure, the hospital has been conducting medical surveillance to other patients stayed in the ward concerned over the same period. A female patient, aged 60, who is under medical surveillance programme was found to have liver enzymes deranged on November 4. The hospital has arranged the patient to undergo hepatitis C viral test and other examinations immediately and the result was positive with hepatitis C

infection.

The patient concerned was admitted to the high dependency unit of the Neurosurgery Department in May. After epidemiological investigation and genetic sequencing, it is showed that the genetic sequence of the female patient's hepatitis C virus is identical with the two male patients infected earlier. As the incubation period for hepatitis C ranges from two weeks to six months, the hospital cannot rule out the possibility of nosocomial infection. The hospital has provided appropriate treatment and follow-up for the patient, including prescribing antiviral drugs and explaining the situation to her and her family members. The patient is in stable condition and was discharged on November 5. Currently, antiviral drugs for acute hepatitis C are highly effective and over 95 per cent of hepatitis C infection can be cured in general. Hepatitis C virus is now undetectable from the two concerned male patients after receiving treatment of antiviral drugs.

The hospital is very concerned about the case and has extended contact tracing investigation as a precautionary measure. The hospital will contact and arrange hepatitis C viral testing for about 200 patients who stayed in the wards concerned during the relevant period and will also provide continuous health surveillance for these patients.

The hospital has reported the case to the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) and the Hospital Authority Head Office (HAHO). The hospital will continue to follow up with CHP and HAHO.

Ten persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operation (with photos)

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Swordfish" today (November 26). A total of five suspected illegal workers and five suspected employers were arrested.

During the operation, the ImmD's Foreign Domestic Helpers Special Investigation Section investigators raided over 15 target locations including restaurants, employment agencies, retail, grocery shops and industrial buildings. The suspected illegal workers comprised five women, aged 39 to 59. Among them, two persons were foreign domestic helpers, and three persons were overstayers. Meanwhile, four men and one woman, aged 39 to 62, were suspected of employing the suspected illegal workers. ImmD investigators found the suspected illegal workers on the target locations performing different jobs, including dishwashing, waitressing, clerical work and delivery. A copy of a forged Hong Kong identity card was also found during the operation. The case is still under investigation, and the ImmD does not rule out the possibility of further arrests.

"A helper should only perform domestic duties for the employer specified in the contract. The helper should not take up any other employment, including part-time domestic duties, with any other person. The employer should not require or allow the helper to carry out any work for any other person," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman also said, "Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him/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 laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an Immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years. Moreover, any person who makes, uses or has in his custody a false instrument commits an offence and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to imprisonment for 14 years.

The spokesman warned that, "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 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, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments immediately.



HK SAR Government strongly rejects malicious slander of Hong Kong's reputation as international financial centre by members of US House of

Representatives

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (November 26) strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects a letter from members of the House of Representatives of the United States (US) to the US Secretary of the Treasury.

A spokesman for the Government solemnly states the following:

"The HKSAR Government strongly disapproves of and firmly rejects malicious slander of Hong Kong's reputation as an international financial centre in the letter. The allegations in the letter have no factual basis and are grossly unfounded. The letter is a crude and reprehensible attempt to spread lies and misinformation about Hong Kong for personal political gain.

"HKSAR Government has been enforcing the sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) fully and vigorously to fulfil our international obligations. We do not implement unilateral sanctions imposed by other countries that constitute a flagrant violation of the international order based on international law and the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

"The HKSARG has long been maintaining an effective mechanism for implementing the resolutions of the UNSC. That includes denying entry of vessels designated by the UNSC as well as suspicious vessels, keeping a close watch on and inspecting suspicious Hong Kong-based companies to prevent them from participating in activities evading UNSC sanctions, and participating in the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Arms Trade Treaty through the Central People's Government. The effectiveness of our work has been well respected and recognised by our trading partners.

"Maintaining the integrity and robustness of our financial systems is high on the HKSAR Government's agenda. Our banks and other financial institutions adhere to international standards and best practices, including those on anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT).

"Hong Kong has been recognised by the Financial Action Task Force, the international standard-setter on AML/CFT, to be overall compliant with the relevant international standards, with a robust legal framework and effective system in this area, especially in the identification and understanding of risks, law enforcement, asset recovery and international co-operation.

"Hong Kong continues to enjoy a high degree of autonomy under the 'one country, two systems' framework. Essential to this is maintaining the common law system, and a judiciary that exercises judicial powers independently. Hong Kong's rule of law is internationally recognised, well reflected in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index. Hong Kong maintains a high ranking and continues to be ahead of some Western countries that often unreasonably criticise the rule of law and human rights situation of Hong Kong.

"Fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and the right to a fair trial, continue to be protected by the Basic Law.

"Like many jurisdictions including the US, we are entitled to enact and implement laws to safeguard national security. The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance was enacted earlier this year to fulfil our overdue constitutional obligation under Article 23 of the Basic Law. The Hong Kong National Security Law and the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance operate together to ensure a stable and predictable environment for our economy and the companies that make it thrive. The offences in the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance are clearly defined and have drawn reference to those in many other advanced economies.

"As a matter of fact, the international business community continues to have confidence in Hong Kong. A survey by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong earlier this year noted that nearly 80 per cent of its members have confidence in Hong Kong's rule of law. Close to 70 per cent of the respondents indicated that their operations had not been affected by the Hong Kong National Security Law.

"The US has substantial economic interest in Hong Kong. Over the past decade, it registered a trade surplus of about US\$270 billion with Hong Kong. Over 1 200 US companies operate in Hong Kong. If the US politicians insist on their acts, it will ultimately undermine the mutually beneficial relations between Hong Kong and the US, harming the interests of the US and its companies."