

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Friday, March 1, 2024 is 105.1 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).

22 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", "Lightshadow" and "Twilight" and joint operations with the Hong Kong Police Force codenamed "Champion" and "Windsand" for four consecutive days from February 26 to yesterday (February 29). A total of 15 suspected illegal workers, four suspected employers, one suspected aider and abettor and two overstayers were arrested.

During the anti-illegal worker operations, ImmD Task Force officers raided 45 target locations including a dance studio, industrial buildings, premises under renovation, restaurants and retail shops. Fifteen suspected illegal workers, four suspected employers, and one suspected aider and abettor were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised eight men and seven women, aged 18 to 55. Among them, three women were suspected of using and being in possession of forged Hong Kong identity cards. Two men and two women, aged 29 to 52, who were suspected of employing the illegal workers, were arrested. One man, aged 34, who was suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached the condition of stay in Hong Kong, was also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 25 target locations in Wan Chai district. Two overstayers were arrested. The arrested overstayers comprised two women, aged 40.

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.



17 landlords of subdivided units under regulated tenancies convicted of contravening relevant statutory requirements

Seventeen 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 \$47,100 today (March 1) at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts. Since the Ordinance has come into force, a total of 142 SDU landlords have been convicted of contravening the Ordinance.

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 tenants to pay for the reimbursement of the apportioned water and/or electricity charges; (3) requesting the tenant to pay money other than the types permitted under the Ordinance; and (4) failing to provide the tenant with a rent receipt. One of the landlords who contravened 14 offences under (1) above was fined \$11,200.

The Rating and Valuation Department (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 appeals to SDU landlords that they must comply with the relevant requirements under the Ordinance, and also remind SDU tenants of their rights under the Ordinance. He also stresses 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 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 prosecutions 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), 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) 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 by 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) 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) for the relevant information.

HAD opens temporary cold shelters

In view of the cold weather, the Home Affairs Department has opened 18 temporary cold shelters in various districts today (March 1) for people in need of the service. The temporary shelters will remain open when the Cold Weather Warning is in force.

Clean mattresses and blankets/quilts, hot meals and hot water will be provided to shelter users free of charge during the opening of temporary shelters.

To ensure that cold shelter users can rest in a quiet and undisturbed environment, members of the public or agencies wishing to make donations to shelter users are requested to register with the staff of the shelter first. Donors will then be directed to place the donated items at a specified indoor location. The staff will help notify the shelter users to collect the items on their own.

Anyone seeking temporary refuge or with any questions about the donation arrangements at the cold shelters may call the department's hotline 2572 8427 for more information.

The 18 temporary cold shelters are located at:

Hong Kong Island:

Central and Western:

Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall
3/F, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex,
2 High Street, Sai Ying Pun

Eastern:

Causeway Bay Community Centre
3/F, 7 Fook Yum Road, Causeway Bay

Southern:

Lei Tung Community Hall
Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

Wan Chai:

Wan Chai Activities Centre
LG/F, Wan Chai Market, 258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

Kowloon:

Kowloon City:

Hung Hom Community Hall
1/F, Kowloon City Government Offices,
42 Bailey Street, Hung Hom

Kwun Tong:

Lam Tin (West) Estate Community Centre
71 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin

Sham Shui Po:

Nam Cheong District Community Centre
1 Cheong San Lane, Sham Shui Po

Wong Tai Sin:

Tsz Wan Shan (South) Estate Community Centre
45 Wan Wah Street, Tsz Wan Shan

Yau Tsim Mong:

Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre
60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei

New Territories:

Islands:

Tung Chung Community Hall
G/F, Tung Chung Municipal Services Building, 39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung

Kwai Tsing:

Tai Wo Hau Estate Community Centre
15 Tai Wo Hau Road, Kwai Chung

North:

Cheung Wah Community Hall
Cheung Wah Estate, Fanling

Sai Kung:

Hang Hau Community Hall
G/F, Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Government Complex,
38 Pui Shing Road, Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O

Sha Tin:

Lung Hang Estate Community Centre
Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin

Tai Po:

Tai Po Community Centre
2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Tsuen Wan:

Lei Muk Shue Community Hall
G/F, Hong Shue House, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan

Tuen Mun:
Butterfly Bay Community Centre
Butterfly Estate (near Tip Sum House), Tuen Mun

Yuen Long:
Long Ping Community Hall
Long Ping Estate, Yuen Long

[Opening ceremony of Lai Wan Market held today \(with photo\)](#)

The opening ceremony of the overhauled Lai Wan Market under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) was held today (March 1), which marks the official reopening of the market.

Officiating at the opening ceremony, the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, said that the Lai Wan Market is a project under the Market Modernisation Programme. The overhauled market is citizen- and district-centric, with a view to delivering quality services for the residents.

The overhauled Lai Wan Market adopts simplicity and modernity as its core design basis, and uses a vibrant colour scheme. It has reconfigured the overall market layout, enhanced the design of stalls, widened the passageways, improved drainage and ventilation facilities, etc. Moreover, a number of new facilities are provided at the market, including public seating, a carcass storage room, recycling facilities and barrier-free facilities.

The market provides 30 stalls which have progressively commenced business from February 2, and the market has been operating smoothly. The new environment and facilities of the market are also well received by the public. The FEHD introduces a new management model in the Lai Wan Market and has strengthened the role of the management service contractor in managing the market, including formulating market promotion and development strategies, with a view to increasing the attractiveness and patronage of the market.

Other officiating guests at the opening ceremony included the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Food), Miss Vivian Lau; the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene, Ms Irene Young; the Director of Architectural Services, Mr Michael Li; the District Officer (Sham Shui Po), Mr Paul Wong; and Members of the Legislative Council (LegCo) Mr Yang Wing-kit, Mr Leung Man-kwong and Mr Vincent Cheng. They were joined by other attending guests including Members of the LegCo, members of Sham Shui Po District Council and Area Committees, members of the local community, etc.

The FEHD will continue to take forward other market development projects to keep public markets abreast with the times to meet public needs.

