

USEE attends Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Food Security Ministerial Meeting (with photo)

The Under Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong, attended the eighth Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Food Security Ministerial Meeting today (August 4) via video conferencing to discuss and exchange views with leaders of other economies on achieving sustainable and resilient agri-food systems.

The meetings of APEC 2023 are held in a hybrid form in the United States this year. The main discussion topics of the Food Security Ministerial Meeting this year include how APEC economies take forward the implementation plan for the Food Security Roadmap Towards 2030 and the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 by promoting interconnectedness, innovation and inclusivity among the economies to combat threats of global food security, and how member economies achieve the objectives of food security through regional co-operation.

During the discussion among ministers, Miss Wong said, "The meeting offers us a valued opportunity to connect and to fortify our economic region in support of food security and sustainable agri-food systems."

Miss Wong remarked that Hong Kong, China supports advancing food safety through the use of digital technology, compressing the time for movement of perishable food imported from other places, enhancing food traceability, working hand in hand with stakeholders to formulate a blueprint for the sustainable development of agriculture and fisheries, and reducing food losses and food waste as part of the efforts to achieve carbon neutrality.

Miss Wong added, "Hong Kong, China fully supports the continued pursuance of measures to strengthen the development of an open, transparent, productive, sustainable and resilient food system, hand in hand with other APEC economies."



16 persons arrested during anti-illegal worker operations (with photos)

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 July 24 to yesterday (July 27). A total of 14 suspected illegal workers, one suspected employer and one suspected aider and abettor were arrested.

During operation "Twilight", ImmD Task Force officers raided 18 target locations including commercial buildings, a massage parlour, premises under renovation, restaurants and retail shops. Seven suspected illegal workers and one suspected employer were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised two men and five women, aged 33 to 52. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. One man, aged 43, was suspected of employing the illegal workers and was also arrested.

During operation "Champion", enforcement officers raided 117 target locations in Central and Western districts, including a laundry, premises under renovation and restaurants. Six suspected illegal workers and one suspected aider and abettor were arrested. The arrested suspected illegal workers comprised six women, aged 27 to 46. One woman, aged 74, who was suspected of aiding and abetting a person who breached the condition of stay in Hong Kong, was also arrested.

Furthermore, during operation "Windsand", one male Mainland visitor, aged 26, was arrested for breaching his condition of stay by being involved in suspected illegal parallel trading activities at Po Wan Road in Sheung Shui district. The goods mainly included cosmetics products and skincare products.

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 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.



[Decision: Coastal access: Section 52 notice for Eastbourne to Camber](#)

These notices set out the Secretary of State's decision to approve the proposals for improving coastal access between Eastbourne and Camber.

[LandsD releases figures on registered lease modifications, land exchanges, private treaty grants and lot extensions in second quarter 2023](#)

The Lands Department (LandsD) announced today (July 14) that it registered 16 lease modifications, one land exchange and one lot extension in the Land Registry during the quarter ending June 2023, of which six were modifications of a technical nature involving nil premium.

Among these 18 land transactions, five are located on Hong Kong Island, five are in Kowloon and eight are in the New Territories. The transactions exclude Small House cases.

During the period, three lots off Anderson Road and another three lots in Kai Tak, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long were granted to the Hong Kong Housing Authority by private treaty for public housing developments.

The above land transactions realised a total land premium of about \$173.867 million.

Transaction records of the lease modifications, land exchanges, private treaty grants and lot extensions, including those registered recently, are uploaded to the LandsD website (www.landsd.gov.hk) on a monthly basis. Details of the transactions may be obtained by searching the registered documents in the Land Registry.

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