

1 SEX INDUSTRY BIZ NEWS

The collapse of a building on Ma Tau Wai Road on Jan 29 which killed several persons (including one suspect sex worker) shocked the public. The small split rooms (with independent bathrooms and kitchens) in those old buildings are targeted. Some experts have pointed out that 90% of these small split rooms in Hong Kong carry negative impact on the structure of the building. Also, most of those old buildings where the small split rooms are concentrated do not strictly follow the safety regulations and are without maintenance. Removals of walls, pillars and other internal structural elements are not uncommon. These may threaten the safety of the buildings and cause danger to the residents. In light of this, the Government has introduced an emergency building inspection scheme, yet girls who may lease these split rooms, should not ignore the problems.

In fact, throughout the process of renting rooms, aside from the first feeling, there are several items that you should check on before making any decision. Firstly, you have to make sure there is no crack on the walls, no immerse of water onto the walls, no falling offs from the ceilings and no leakage along the pipes in toilet. Besides, you have to see whether the corridor and fire door are clear of rubbish and other stuff, otherwise it may block your way of escape when an accident happens.

In case of any of the abovementioned problems, do not ignore it. Contact the landlord immediately to arrange the repair, or call a certified repairman for fixing the problem.

2 WORK REPORT

2.1 Chinese New Year Gathering

I was really very happy, and felt so relaxed! Besides work, enjoying yourself is also important. Ive already hung up the paper golden fish that I learned how to fold yesterday. Whenever I saw it, it reminded me of the fun we had yesterday at the party. You cant earn all the money you want. I will join your future activities.

I feel great that Ive made a lot of new friends. I dont want to work and be alone all the time. We have to be more open-minded. We cant earn all the money we want.

I am not a machine. I also need rest and entertainment. I am willing to make time for some activities if I am interested. I am happy that Ive learned how to fold a paper golden fish and make a lucky knot. Its much more fun to do this in a group.

3 sex workers who joined our Chinese New Year gathering told us how much fun it was. On 24 Feb, 21 sex workers and 7 volunteers joined our Chinese New Year gathering and we enjoyed Poon Choi together. Our 3 student interns prepared a series of activities for everybody, including fortune telling for the Year of Tiger, psychological tests, learning how to fold a paper golden fish and make a lucky knot etc. Seeing everybody leave with a smile on her face, we were sure that it signifies a good start of the year.



2.2 Resource Centre Catalogue has been uploaded!

Our Resource Centre contains articles and books on sex work related issues. The most updated catalogue has just been uploaded to our website. Please check the following link for your reference:

<http://www.afro.org.hk/EN/resources.php>

2.3 Update News on Proposals on a Sex Offender Register

In 2008, the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong (LRC) published a consultation paper on Interim Proposals on a Sex Offender Register. AFRO submitted its official response on 23 Oct 2008. (<http://www.afro.org.hk/pdf/press/20081023-2.pdf>) (in Chinese).

On 2 Feb 2010, the LRC published a report on Sexual Offences Records Checks for Child-related Work: Interim Proposals. (<http://www.hkreform.gov.hk/en/publications/rsexoff.htm>). We are delighted to see that the LRC has adopted AFROs recommendation and excluded Soliciting for an immoral purpose from the specified list of sexual offences. Here we would like to reiterate that the Review of Sexual Offences Sub-committee under the LRC should closely follow the work directions that they set in 2006, which were to review the existing sexual offences that may be

gender-specific or based on sexual orientation, and/or may not adequately reflect the range of non-consensual conduct which should be subject to criminal sanction, which we believe should include Soliciting for an immoral purpose (Section 147, Chapter 200, Crimes Ordinances), and initiate the study on decriminalization of sex work.

3 FUTURE WORK

3.1 AFRO Club

To further enhance sex workers relationships with AFRO, we will set up the AFRO Club, a platform for interaction and communication, officially on 8 Mar 2010.

AFRO Club members can enjoy discounts at the AFRO Shop and AFRO Clinic for purchasing condoms and receiving vaccine injections, and receive special offers for joining AFROs activities that charge minimal fees. A surprise birthday gift will also be offered by the AFRO Club to every member.

4 AFROs NEWS READING

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/02/03/243389/Married-prostitutes.htm>

Married prostitutes may have to get their spouses' consent

TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Married sex workers should get the consensus of their spouses before engaging in sex trade, suggested a study by Ministry of The Interior (MOI). It has created a lot of noises on whether it is against human rights and discrimination laws.

Jiang Yi-huah (y), minister of MTI, explained at a press conference yesterday that it was just a suggestion made by scholars in a study commissioned by the ministry instead of a final decision. He said the committee suggested it because adultery is illegal by the current law.

The suggestion and other issues V whether to set up special zones, whether to hold a local referendum on the issue, and whether the trade could be operated by corporate entities V are all being studied and have yet to be finalized, he added.

Chi Hui-jung (fe), legislator of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), said if prostitution is to be decriminalized, it would be just another occupation. Do other jobs need your spousal consent? She asked. If it is not decriminalized, what's the point of getting spouses' consensus, it would still be illegal. And if sex workers need their spouses' consensus, do their customers have to ask for their spouses' permission too?

Secretary general of Collective of Sex Workers and Supporters, Wang Fang-ping (J) said COI is not really helping the sex workers. These studies would only create more confusion and new problems

According to TVBS, a reporter confronted Jiang at the press conference and asked, Would you sign the agreement if your wife asked you to? Jiang said he refused to answer personal questions. The reporter furthered, Do you need your spouses' consensus to be a minister? Isn't this discrimination? You said adultery is illegal. Can we sue our spouses for having extramarital affairs?

This is a very dumb study, the reporter blasted. Why do you waste our money on that? On Nov. 6 last year, Justices of the Constitutional Court announced the J.Y. Interpretation no. 666 saying that it was unconstitutional that the law only punishes the prostitutes but not the patrons. It suggested to decriminalize prostitution or to change the current laws. It ordered that the article that makes prostitution illegal shall become void within two years, which means laws have to be changed by Nov. 6 next year.

MTI had been seeking opinions from scholars, religious groups, representatives of sex workers, and the public in general to balance the rights of sex workers with concepts of decency.

Jiang said the public has contradicting views on prostitution. According to surveys done by MOI, 52 percent of the respondents agreed that prostitution should not be penalized. And if both sides agree, it should not be a punishable offense. 43 percent disagreed. 48.2 percent of the public said the government should give work permits for sex workers, while 43.4 percent disagreed. However, 47.8 percent of the respondents said prostitution should not be decriminalized, while 43.1 percent thought it should be.

On who should be punished if prostitution stayed illegal, 23 said only the prostitutes, 12 percent said only the patrons, while 28 percent said they had no comment.

According to the survey, 68.5 percent of the respondent said prostitution should be managed as an industry. 83.6 percent thought the government should set up special zones for prostitution. 40.3 percent said prostitution should be prohibited outside the designated area. 25.1 percent said the areas should not be restricted and prostitution should be allowed anywhere as long as it is registered.

Governments of Kaohsiung County, Taipei County, Taichung County, Tainan County, Penghu County, Hsinchu City, Taichung City and Pingtung County have agreed to set up special zones for prostitution. Governement of Taipei City and Chiayi City disagreed.

Comment:

The suggestion violates sex workers basic human rights, autonomy and dignity! We believe that sex work is work, just like any other occupation, and a person should have her/his autonomy and does not need her/his spouses official permission to take a job.

AFROs website: www.afro.org.hk

Email: afro@afro.org.hk

Tel: (852) 27701065

Fax: (852) 27701201