

HONG KONG STANDARD
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79 arrested as police tackle the vice trade

By Jonathan Hill

TARGETING the pimps who run prostitution syndicates using girls from overseas has become a police priority, senior officers say.

"We're re-examining the whole aspect of vice," a senior police source said.

Seventy-nine people were arrested at the weekend in a seven-hour anti-vice operation which involved 220 police officers.

The operation, which included the new and secretive regional syndicated vice squad, targeted districts of Kowloon West, notorious haunts of the vice trade.

Officers from Kowloon West region and district provided the main manpower for a series of raids which began at 10 pm on Saturday.

Many prostitutes came from Thailand or the Philippines and earned millions of dollars each month for the syndicates.

The same syndicates arrange for the girls' transportation to Hong Kong, provide clients and arrange for them to remain in the territory illegally.

Of the 79 arrested in Saturday's operation, 51 were foreign and six were local.

The foreign women, Filipina, Malaysian, Nepalese and Thai nationals, were arrested for immigration offences.

Officers visited 137 premises and removed 39 vice signboards. A total of 452 people were questioned.

Director of Immigration Laurence Leung said during his year-end review last week that the increasing number of illegal workers "was a matter of concern".

A total of 1,711 foreign prostitutes found during anti-vice operations were repatriated, Mr Leung said.