

Bogus marriages front for vice racket

Prostitutes marry for local ID and papers

SYNDICATED marriages involving Government servants are being used to import hundreds of Malaysian prostitutes into Hongkong - some earning more than \$100,000 per month.

Police said about 400 Malaysian prostitutes are working in the Mong Kok area.

Official police records show that at least 42 of them are dependent wives of local men - including public servants - and that an equal number of prostitutes plan to marry in future.

Another police source said that when called to verify the bogus marriages, the "husbands" appeared at police stations and the Immigration Department and swore the marriages were genuine.

The source said the Immigration Department was powerless to stop the practice. Further claims said that the girls could buy false passports from corrupt Malaysian officials.

A Mong Kok vice raid last week turned out 12 Malaysian girls from one building in Portland Street. A passport check revealed that two had already married local men while another two claimed they were planning to marry in Hongkong in the near future.

"The Malaysian girls are very smart - there's no one syndicate you can point to as being the centre of the recruiting process," said Mong Kok Chief Inspector Robin Jolly.

"They are nearly all ethnic Chinese.

"They speak the 'lingo' (Cantonese), and because Malaysia is still part of

the Commonwealth, they come up here and automatically get three-month tourist visas without having to arrange them back home.

"Many of the girls already have some experience in the trade back home and know what to expect when they come to Hongkong.

"They start to work in a bar or nightclub for a couple of weeks and then they get in with the syndicates which set them up in Mong Kok.

"The syndicate arranges a local marriage for which the man gets paid a nominal fee - a lot of the time he already owes money to loan sharks and does it to repay his debts.

"The girls then register to get married in Hongkong, which extends their visas for another three months, and if she does end up getting married, she gets an ID card and another 12 month stamp on her passport."

Inspector Jolly said some of the girls recruited friends back home.

Alternatively, local "mafoos" (pimps) go to Malaysia themselves and recruit girls from well-known haunts. Most come from Kuala Lumpur.

The marriage racket is not new to Hongkong. In the late 1970s and early 1980s bogus marriages were used to import hundreds of Thai and Filipino prostitutes.

But unlike their predecessors, Malaysians are often shrewd businesswomen working on average only 12 months before amassing small fortunes and retiring back home.

Because of their exceptionally good looks, language skills and sexual prowess, they command premium prices - \$350-\$450 for half an hour, although most "sessions" last just 15 minutes.

