

Chinese Opera Festival to present eight delightful programmes to mark 10th anniversary

The Chinese Opera Festival (COF), an annual highlight event presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will mark its 10th anniversary in 2019. Over the years, the COF has presented numerous remarkable productions with distinguished performers to bring the best of Chinese opera to the local stage. This year, there will be eight delightful programmes from different parts of China from June to August.

The Xiqu Centre of the West Kowloon Cultural District will jointly present some of the COF programmes at its venues to bring a new experience to the audience.

The China National Peking Opera Company and the Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company will be featured in the opening programme "Peking Opera Masters North and South" and give three performances. The performers will include Peking opera star duo Yu Kuizhi and Li Shengsu; "hualian" (painted-face) specialist Yang Chi; Shi Yihong, a renowned "qingyi" (virtuous female) from the school of Mei Lanfang; Wang Peiyu, an actress from the school of Yu Shuyan specialising in "laosheng" (old male) roles; and Fu Xiru, an actor from the school of Yu Shuyan specialising in civil and military "laosheng" (old male) roles.

The Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theatre will bring to Hong Kong a strong cast of talented actors and actresses including Shi Xiaomei, Hu Jinfang and Zhang Jidie, venerable masters of Kunqu opera and Representative Bearers of Kunqu Opera as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage and winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre, to grace the stage. They will be supported by Kong Aiping and Li Hongliang, also winners of the Plum Blossom Award, in the full version of "Mistake Caused by a Kite" and two operatic excerpts.

Another programme featuring Kunqu opera and Peking opera will be performed by Jingkun Theatre and Shandong Peking Opera Theatre. Well-known local artist Tang Yuen-ha will once again join renowned Kunqu opera artists Cai Zhengren and Lu Yongchang to present excerpts of operatic classics at the Tea House Theatre of the Xiqu Centre in the West Kowloon Cultural District. The setting of this new venue will create a close intimacy between the audience and the performers on stage.

Last but not the least, one of the highlights will feature a number of artists from the Shanghai Yue Opera Group who are National Class One Performers and winners of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre, including the vice president of the Group, Qian Huili; the company director of the Number One Troupe of the Group, Fang Yafen; and leading actresses Zhang Ruihong, Shan Yangping and Wang Zhiping from different schools. This

star-studded cast will perform the Group's signature repertoire.

For regional operas, this year's COF will present Liyuan opera and Ou opera, two regional genres different in style but equally appealing on stage. Liyuan opera is one of the oldest theatrical forms in China still extant today. Zeng Jingping, a two-time winner of the Plum Blossom Award, worked with the Experimental Theatre of Liyuan Opera of Fujian to revive an almost lost play, "Zhu Maichen", based on an incomplete edition to restore its original features and charm that emerged 800 years ago. The Wenzhou Opera Research Institute will present three full-length Ou opera productions, "The Legend of the White Snake", "Killing a Dog to Admonish Her Husband" and "Gao Ji and Wu Sanchun". The cast will be led by leading lights in the world of Ou opera today, winner of the Plum Blossom Award for Chinese Theatre Fang Rujiang and National Class One Performer Cai Xiaoqiu. The programme offers a representative selection of civil and martial plays and promises an exciting theatrical experience.

To also mark the 10th anniversary of the inscription of Cantonese opera onto the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, local Cantonese opera virtuosi will collaborate to stage delightful programmes. Veteran Cantonese opera actor Yuen Siu-fai and Chinese music performer Yu Siu-wah will join noted vocalists in song art in "Guangdong Quadrangle – Four Folk Music Types in Concert". The concert will feature four indigenous musical art forms of Guangdong – the unaccompanied singing of "dabayin", narrative singing, Cantonese music and the Cantonese operatic song in classic singing style – within a quadrangle courtyard with Chinese architecture. A new Cantonese opera written by Sun Kim-long, "A Love Poem Stained with Blood", with Sun also acting as part of the cast together with other Cantonese opera veterans and young artists, will also be performed. The production will contribute to the transmission of Cantonese opera.

Details of the programmes are as follows:

Opening programme – Peking Opera Masters North and South: China National Peking Opera Company and Shanghai Jingju Theatre Company

June 13 to 15 and June 17 to 19:

Grand Theatre, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District

A New Cantonese Opera "A Love Poem Stained with Blood"

June 21 and 22: Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

June 30: Auditorium, Tuen Mun Town Hall

Guangdong Quadrangle – Four Folk Music Types in Concert

June 25 and 26: Theatre, Hong Kong City Hall

July 4 to 7: Tea House Theatre, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District

Experimental Theatre of Liyuan Opera of Fujian

June 28 to 30: Theatre, Hong Kong City Hall

Jiangsu Kunqu Opera Theatre

July 19 to 21: Grand Theatre, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District

Shanghai Yue Opera Group

July 25 to 28: Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

"The Fragrance of Chrysanthemums and Orchids" – A Close Encounter of Peking Opera and Kunqu Opera: Jingkun Theatre and Shandong Peking Opera Theatre

August 2 to 4: Tea House Theatre, Xiqu Centre, West Kowloon Cultural District

Wenzhou Opera Research Institute

August 16 to 18: Auditorium, Ko Shan Theatre New Wing

This year the COF will continue to hold extension activities such as lectures, film screenings, meet-the-artists sessions and exhibitions in a bid to create a comprehensive cultural experience for the audience as well as the general public.

Tickets for all performances will be available from April 17 onwards at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk) and the Xiqu Centre Ticket Office. For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.cof.gov.hk.

New members appointed to Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food

The Food and Health Bureau announced today (April 12) the appointment of Mr Kiyotaka Ando, Mr Peter Johnston and Mr Gerry Ma Kwai-yung as new members to the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food for the period from April 15, 2019, to March 14, 2021.

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said, "The Committee has all along been providing invaluable and practical recommendations to the Food and Health Bureau in taking forward initiatives to reduce the salt and sugar intake of the general public. I look forward to receiving further advice from the Committee."

The Committee was established in March 2015 to steer the direction and co-ordinate the work of reducing salt and sugar intake by the local population, and formulate and oversee the implementation and evaluation of the Action Plans for Salt and Sugar Reduction in Food in Hong Kong.

With effect from April 15, 2019, the membership of the Committee is as follows:

Chairman

Mr Bernard Charnwut Chan

Vice-Chairman

Dr Mak Sin-ping

Non-official members

Mr Kiyotaka Ando*

Mr Peter Johnston*

Professor Kwan Hoi-shan

Mr Lam Chiu-wing

Ms Sylvia Lam See-way

Miss Winona Lo Oi-ling

Professor Ronald Ma Ching-wan

Mr Gerry Ma Kwai-yung*

Mrs Elizabeth Mok Lee Mi-yu

Dr Ricky Szeto Wing-fu

Dr Terry Ting Ho-yan

Ms Tse Po-chu

Mr Clory Wong

Ms Gilly Wong Fung-han

Mr Jason Wong Ho-yin

Ex-officio members

Representative of Food and Health Bureau

Representative of Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Representative of Department of Health

Representative of Education Bureau

* new members

Twenty immigration offenders arrested

The Immigration Department (ImmD) mounted a territory-wide anti-illegal worker operation codenamed "Twilight" from April 8 to 11. A total of 16 illegal workers and four suspected employers were arrested.

During the operation, ImmD Task Force officers raided 37 target locations including companies, construction sites, an elderly home, factories, a massage parlour, a residential building, restaurants and warehouses. Sixteen illegal workers and four employers were arrested. The illegal workers comprised four men and 12 women, aged 30 to 54. Among them, one woman was a holder of a recognisance form, which prohibits her from taking any employment. Meanwhile, two men and two women, aged 34 to 48, were

suspected of employing the illegal workers.

"Any person who contravenes a condition of stay in force in respect of him 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," an ImmD spokesman said.

The spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are 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 Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to 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. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct 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 officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat 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 interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Registration of poll particulars to close on June 15

The following is issued on behalf of the Electoral Affairs Commission:

Under the Particulars Relating to Candidates on Ballot Papers (Legislative Council and District Councils) Regulation (Cap. 541M), candidates in the Legislative Council and District Council elections may apply to print certain registered particulars on the ballot papers for easier identification by electors.

Bodies or persons wishing to register or amend their particulars with the Electoral Affairs Commission (EAC) in the 2019 registration cycle should hand in their applications by June 15. According to the Regulation, these particulars include the names, abbreviations of names and emblems of prescribed bodies, and the personal emblems of prescribed persons.

In accordance with the Regulation, approved specified particulars have been included in a register made available for public inspection at the EAC's website (www.eac.hk). Bodies or persons concerned are not required to make another application in respect of the specified particulars which have been approved and included in the register.

"Although applications can be submitted at any time during the year, only those applications submitted on or before the statutory cut-off date of June 15 will be processed in the 2019 registration cycle. Applications submitted after June 15 will only be processed in the 2020 registration cycle," a spokesman for the EAC said today (April 12).

Application forms are available at the Registration and Electoral Office (REO) and all District Offices. They can also be downloaded from the EAC's website.

The EAC will carefully consider all applications in accordance with the criteria and procedures stipulated in the Regulation.

Details of all successful applications will be gazetted and open to public inspection at the REO during office hours. The public can also view the information at the EAC's website.

For enquiries concerning the application procedures, please call the REO hotline on 2891 1001.

Opening remarks by S for S at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee today (April 12):

Chairman,

€€€In the draft Estimates for the new financial year, allocation for the policy areas under the Security Bureau's responsibility will account for \$48.9 billion, representing 8 per cent of the total government expenditure.

On law and order, the major operational targets of the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) for 2019 are to combat violent crimes, triads, syndicated and organised crimes, dangerous drugs and "quick-cash" crimes; to enhance cyber security and combat technology crimes; and to ensure public safety and step up counter-terrorism work.

A total of 179 additional posts will be created in the HKPF in 2019-20. These new posts are mainly for increasing manpower support for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), strengthening the HKPF's capability in tackling trafficking in persons (TIP) and protecting foreign domestic helpers, and enhancing Hong Kong's capabilities in anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing, etc.

On control points, the two new ports at the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link West Kowloon Terminal and the HZMB Hong Kong Port were commissioned in September and October 2018 respectively. Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point is expected to come into operation in 2019-20, and the front-line law enforcement departments will get prepared for the commissioning to ensure smooth operation of the new control point.

€€€On non-refoulement claims, since the commencement of the comprehensive review of the strategy for handling non-refoulement claims in early 2016, various measures have yielded considerable results so far. The numbers of illegal immigrants and non-refoulement claims have dropped significantly by 80 per cent from the peak. The Immigration Department (ImmD) has also basically completed the screening of the backlog of over 10 000 claims. Although there are still some 6 000 appeals pending handling by the Torture Claims Appeal Board, the number is expected to drop gradually with their handling completed in two years.

The Government will continue with various suitable measures, including the submission of an amendment bill to amend the Immigration Ordinance for improving the screening procedures, and will ensure that sufficient resources are available to handle the claims and appeals efficiently and fairly, coupled with dedicated efforts into expediting the removal of the rejected

claimants from Hong Kong.

On combating TIP, in March last year, the Government established a high-level inter-bureau/departmental Steering Committee for combating TIP. It is chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration. At the same time, an Action Plan, with 14 new measures, was promulgated. In 2019-20, the HKPF, the ImmD, the Customs and Excise Department, the Labour Department and the Department of Justice will create a total of 98 posts to continue full and vigorous implementation of various measures promulgated in the Action Plan.

On the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise commenced in December 2018. The ImmD will continue to replace the existing smart Hong Kong identity cards of all holders in phases at the nine Smart Identity Card Replacement Centres.

On fire and ambulance services, the Fire Services Department (FSD) will have 135 new posts in the new financial year, which are mainly for increasing ambulance shifts; serving as ambulance hospital controllers; operating the Rail-Road Fire Appliance procured for fire-fighting and rescue operations in railway conduits and tunnels; and strengthening the department's operational efficiency in handling maritime incidents and supporting in high-angle rescue operations, etc.

On the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme, over 2 500 applications were received under the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme launched last year by the Government in collaboration with the Urban Renewal Authority. Successful applicants were notified gradually, and would be assigned case officers in phases, who would provide appropriate assistance and follow-up. We hope that this subsidy scheme, together with a series of improvised measures actively promoted by the FSD, could assist owners of old composite buildings to carry out improvement works as early as practicable in order to comply with the enhanced fire safety requirements under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance.

On custody and rehabilitation, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) is committed to improving correctional facilities, including installing the electric locks systems in Stanley Prison, Tai Lam Centre for Women and Pik Uk Correctional Institution, and replacing and enhancing the closed-circuit television systems in 11 correctional facilities, including Stanley Prison, Pik Uk Prison and Hei Ling Chau Correctional Institution.

The CSD will develop the smart prison concept proactively for the sustainable development of the correctional system, using innovation and technology (including piloting the Health Signs Monitoring System, the Video Analytic Monitoring System and the Passage Surveillance System) to further modernise correctional facilities, with a view to enhancing the efficiency of prison management and level of security.

The CSD will continue to provide diversified and market-oriented vocational training to persons in custody, having regard to the overall situation and demand of the employment market, with a view to enhancing their

opportunities to find employment after release, thereby facilitating their re-integration into society.

Chairman, the representatives from departments and I are pleased to answer questions from Members.

Thank you, Chairman.