

# Correctional Services Department

## Annual Review 2024 (with photos)

The following is the translation of the speech given by the Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Wong Kwok-hing, at the annual press conference today (February 20):

### Foreword

The Safeguarding National Security Ordinance officially came into effect upon gazettal in 2024, reflecting the determination of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to safeguard national security and building momentum for stable social development. Shouldering the missions of safeguarding national security and maintaining social stability, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) was committed to ensuring the effective delivery of its custodial and rehabilitation work in the past year. At the same time, the CSD has been actively extending its reach beyond the prison walls to proactively promote support for offender rehabilitation and conduct crime prevention education in the community through utilising the CSD's unique resources, with a view to nurturing young people into law-abiding social leaders.

### (1) Overview of penal population

In 2024, the number of admissions to correctional institutions (including convicted persons, remands and detainees) increased 7 per cent to 18 438 as compared with 2023. In addition, the average daily penal population at correctional institutions also increased significantly to 9 550 persons in 2024 from 8 498 persons in 2023, representing an increase of 12 per cent. The average daily occupancy rate also rose from 75 per cent to 85 per cent.

The year-on-year rate of increase in the average daily number of remands has been over 15 per cent since 2021. The respective number of persons stood high at 3 650 in 2024, representing an increase of 18 per cent as compared with 3 096 persons in 2023, which hit a new record high since 2000.

On the other hand, since 2021, the CSD has assisted to detain adult detainees who are non-Hong Kong residents detained under the Immigration Ordinance. The number of detainees increased by 36 per cent, from 580 in 2023 to 787 in 2024, while the average daily number of detainees substantially increased by 72 per cent from 185 in 2023 to 318 in 2024.

In 2024, the number of admissions to correctional institutions owing to their involvement in offences relating to the black-clad violence (including riots, unlawful assembly) and their contravention of the Hong Kong National Security Law/Safeguarding National Security Ordinance was 410 (64 of them were involved in the contravention of the Hong Kong National Security Law/Safeguarding National Security Ordinance). Compared to 950 in 2023, the

number of such admissions dropped by 540, representing a decrease of 57 per cent. As at December 31, 2024, the number of persons in custody involved in offences relating to the black-clad violence and those contravening the Hong Kong National Security Law/Safeguarding National Security Ordinance was 591, representing a decrease of 24 per cent as compared to 776 in 2023.

In response to the ever-changing penal population, especially the increasing population of remands, the CSD has deployed part of the capacity of individual correctional institutions to admit remands in order to alleviate the overcrowding situation of the reception centre. Moreover, the Department has already commenced the in-situ partial redevelopment of Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, which will increase its capacity for admitting adult male remands in the long run. The Department will continue to closely monitor the changes in penal population and flexibly redeploy resources having regard to the actual operational needs to adjust the capacity for persons on remand in a timely manner.

## (2) Custodial work

Despite the increasing number of admissions and the growing penal population in the past year, which posed formidable challenges to both the governance and security of correctional institutions, correctional officers continued to stay united and stand fast to their posts. With the continued adoption of the nip-in-the-bud strategy, under which intelligence collection and search operations were stepped up, coupled with the application of technology and the upgrading of facilities and equipment, we strived to combat illicit activities and acts of indiscipline, thereby maintaining the good order and discipline of correctional institutions.

With regard to intercepting the smuggling of dangerous drugs into institutions, under the intensive measures by the Department, there were only six seizure cases of suspected dangerous drugs last year, representing a significant decrease of over 60 per cent as compared with 16 cases in 2023. Five of the cases were found in body-cavity concealment of newly admitted persons in custody; and the remaining one case was found in the mail sent to a person in custody. In addition, the Department continued to take a proactive approach by conducting a total of 12 547 joint search/special search/night raid operations in correctional institutions last year, covering 20 589 locations. Mobile X-ray scanners were also introduced to enhance the efficacy of search operations and strengthen the deterrent effect.

In 2024, as the number of admissions to and the penal population of correctional institutions kept increasing, the number of cases involving acts of indiscipline and violent acts among persons in custody also rose. In 2024, the number of disciplinary charges against persons in custody was 6 393. Counted against the penal population, there were 669 disciplinary cases per 1 000 persons in custody, representing an increase of 7 per cent as compared with 628 cases in 2023. The top three charges were "offending good order and discipline", "possession of any unauthorised article" and "disobeying the orders of correctional officers", which accounted for 35 per cent, 28 per cent and 18 per cent of the total number of disciplinary charges

respectively. In 2024, a total of 3 412 persons in custody were subject to disciplinary charges, representing an increase of 401 persons or 13 per cent as compared with 3 011 persons in 2023. Among them, 618 committed disciplinary offences three or more times, involving 2 837 disciplinary charges, which accounted for 44 per cent of the total number of disciplinary charges.

In 2024, a total of 382 cases involving violent acts were recorded, representing an increase of 9 per cent as compared with 351 cases in 2023. These cases mainly involved fighting among persons in custody and assaulting others. Among these cases, 26 cases of a more serious nature were referred to the Police for follow-up, representing an increase of 18 per cent as compared to 22 cases in 2023. The number of correctional officers who were injured after being attacked or while stopping violent acts was 20, representing an increase of 33 per cent as compared to 15 in 2023.

In 2024, five cases of concerted acts of indiscipline among persons in custody were recorded, representing an increase of one case over 2023. The number of participants involved in the above incidents was 49 in total.

To maintain the good order and discipline of correctional institutions, apart from combating various kinds of acts of indiscipline through strict law enforcement by institutional staff, the Regional Response Team carried out a total of four operations in 2024 to support the security work of correctional institutions, which involved the handling of incidents like collective actions against the institutional management and group fights among persons in custody.

Apart from combating illicit activities and acts of indiscipline among persons in custody, correctional officers must stay vigilant at all times to detect and prevent any self-harm acts by persons in custody. Under the concerted efforts of correctional officers, a total of 18 self-harm cases were recorded in 2024, representing a significant decrease of 40 per cent as compared with 30 cases in 2023.

### (3) Rehabilitation

In 2024, the Department enhanced its rehabilitation work on all fronts by fully implementing various measures, including strengthening the determination of persons in custody to rehabilitate, extending the reach of rehabilitation programmes beyond the prison walls, and making an all-out effort to seek participation in and support for rehabilitation work from all sectors of the community, with a view to assisting persons in custody to turn over a new leaf and reintegrate into society.

To address the special rehabilitation needs of persons in custody involved in the black-clad violence and contravening the Hong Kong National Security Law/ Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, the Department continued to launch a number of diversified rehabilitation programmes under the Project PATH to enhance their knowledge of the Chinese traditional culture, foster good character and moral education, and teach them to

appreciate and pass down Chinese culture. A flag-raising and foot drill competition was held for the first time with an aim to enhance their sense of national identity.

Furthermore, to enable persons in custody to obtain more opportunities for upward mobility, the CSD launched "Project JET" in October 2022 to provide one-stop training and career development opportunities for persons in custody, encouraging them to make life planning early, make full use of their talents and contribute to society. The project includes life planning, in-centre training, post-release internship, formal employment and a mentoring scheme. "Project JET" was awarded the Community Corrections Award, an excellence award by the International Corrections and Prisons Association last year.

The CSD launched the Rehabilitation Dog Services in early 2024 at Lo Wu Correctional Institution and Phoenix House to provide animal-assisted therapies to persons in custody in need, with a view to improving their depression and anxiety and reducing their violent tendencies. Moreover, the Rehabilitation Dog Services Internship Programme implemented at Phoenix House helps halfway house trainees build self-confidence and develop a sense of responsibility through caring for rehabilitation dogs. Trainees and rehabilitation dogs were arranged to visit elderly service centres to conduct caring visits, thereby giving back to society.

In 2024, the Department also set up two family therapy centres at the Multi-purpose Family and Rehabilitation Service Centres in Tuen Mun and Sheung Shui to organise different kinds of treatment programmes for rehabilitated drug addicts under statutory supervision and rehabilitated persons with violent tendencies or radical thoughts. By extending the in-prison psychological and family counselling services to the community, the Department aims to help them resolve family problems so that they can rebuild family relationships smoothly.

In 2024, the Department set up the Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit to envision evidence-informed rehabilitation services through promoting research and making reference to the latest international research findings. Last year, the Unit published two issues of "Insight", a research bulletin, with contents covering "the effect of education programmes on the psychological conditions and rehabilitation motives of persons in custody", "how rehabilitation dogs enhance psychological health", and "the application of sports activities on male persons in custody". Moreover, the Unit has also endeavoured to enhance professional exchanges and its network with overseas, Mainland and local research consultants and practitioners, so that they can consider collaborative research issues on rehabilitation services.

On education, to further enable the inaugural graduates of the Ethics College who have obtained the Diploma of Applied Education to pursue higher qualifications, a two-year full-time Associate of General Studies distance programme was organised in the Ethics College in September 2024 to provide persons in custody with an option for further studies. Meanwhile, the CSD has also extended the Ethics College to Pik Uk Prison to provide a half-day

Associate of General Studies programme and half-day vocational training for graduates of the Ethics College who are unable to complete the associate degree programme during the remainder of their sentences. This allows them to receive short-term educational and vocational training and continuously equip themselves in preparation for reintegration into society for academic and career pursuits upon their imminent release.

The overall passing rate of public examinations taken by persons in custody was 88.4 per cent last year (85.3 per cent and 90.6 per cent for adult and young persons in custody respectively), representing an increase of 5.7 percentage points over 2023. One person in custody obtained a total of 25 marks in six papers under the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination. Four additional persons met the general entrance requirements for local universities. Moreover, one person in custody was awarded a doctoral degree, and 11 others were awarded bachelor's degrees.

On vocational training, the Department provides 13 market-oriented vocational training courses to young persons in custody, and 43 vocational training courses with more than 1 700 training places, an increase of 300 places as compared with 2023, for lawfully residing adult persons in custody who are due for discharge within 24 months and eligible for employment to enrol on a voluntary basis.

Last year, the overall passing rate of vocational training examinations taken by persons in custody was 99.5 per cent (99.3 per cent and 100 per cent for adult and young persons in custody respectively). Their employment rates after six months of employment follow-up period upon release were 87.3 per cent and 78.4 per cent respectively.

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Moreover, the Department has endeavoured to establish close partnerships with organisations and individuals from different sectors of the community, with a view to providing comprehensive rehabilitation services. The Department held in June last year the first Rehabilitation Partners Award Scheme Presentation Ceremony to honour 120 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charitable institutions, commercial organisations, post-secondary institutions, etc, in recognition of their active support for persons in custody and rehabilitated persons over the past two years, as well as to encourage different sectors of the community to become Rehabilitation Partners and support rehabilitation work.

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Over the past 20 years and so, based on the year of discharge, Hong Kong's recidivism rate (the percentage of readmission of local persons in custody to correctional institutions following conviction for a new offence within two years after discharge) has recorded a significant decrease from 39.9 per cent in 2000 to 21.8 per cent in 2022. The hard-earned result reflects the perseverance and hard work of correctional officers, the firm determination of persons in custody and rehabilitated offenders to turn over a new leaf, as well as the support for offender rehabilitation from all sectors of the community.

#### (4) Community education

The CSD's Rehabilitation Pioneer Project (RPP) provides a series of community education activities to disseminate to young people the four key messages of safeguarding our country and home, leading a law-abiding and drug-free life as well as supporting offender rehabilitation. Last year, the Department strengthened its patriotic education for young people to enhance their sense of national identity and raise their understanding of our country. A total of 45 133 participants joined various RPP activities last year, representing an increase of 2.5 per cent as compared with 44 015 in 2023.

To further promote the coverage of the Rehabilitation Pioneer Leaders (RPL) in the community, the Department continued a school-based programme to provide on-campus training. Currently, a total of six schools have joined the school-based programme, and the total number of RPL trainees has exceeded 600, representing an increase of 49 per cent as compared to that at the end of 2023. The Department also continued to enhance the diverse training programmes for RPL to help them develop their potential, including organising two certificate courses in 2024, namely Foundation Certificate in Correctional Studies and Criminal Legal Studies and Foundation Certificate in Moral and Personal Management, both pitched at Level 2 under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework for Secondary One to Three RPL trainees to strengthen their awareness of making joint effort to build a society underpinned by the rule of law, foster positive thinking and establish good virtues.

Upholding the principle of sustainable development, the Department launched an initiative called "Captain Gor Union" and its mobile application last December, establishing a membership system for the RPP to recruit primary and secondary students as members. The members will then be arranged to join different activities promoting national security, national education, crime prevention, anti-drug and support for offender rehabilitation messages, as well as cultural exchange activities. The new membership system not only makes youth development work more systematic and sustainable but also helps recruit young people with great potential to join the RPL, with a view to continuously bringing in new blood to the Department's youth uniformed group.

The Department organised different types of exchange activities under the theme "exploring our country 探索祖國 and caring the community" last year. RPL trainees were arranged to visit different places on the Mainland, such as Wuhan, Beijing, Tianjin and Urumqi, and participate in volunteer activities. In addition, at the end of last year, the Department implemented a comprehensive co-operation programme with the charitable organisation, Long Caring, and arranged for RPL trainees to be the first uniformed youth group to join a tour to the Hong'an Hope Town in Hubei to enable them to learn about our country's poverty alleviation work and the road to great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Furthermore, in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Department organised the first 3×3 Basketball Invitation Game for Hong Kong Uniformed Youth Groups in

celebration of National Day last October to unite different uniformed youth groups in Hong Kong, aiming to promote patriotism through positive sport games, enhance young people's sense of national identity and nurture them into a new generation with an affection for our country and Hong Kong and a positive mindset.

#### (5) Human resources

In 2024, a total of 30 Officers and 344 Assistant Officers II were recruited. As at December 31, 2024, there were 674 vacancies for disciplined staff, accounting for 10.3 per cent of the overall establishment of the Department. The Department continued to implement the Post-retirement Service Contract Scheme last year to relieve the manpower strain. As at December 31, 2024, a total of 127 retirees were recruited. About 45 Officers are expected to be recruited this year, and the year-round recruitment for the post of Assistant Officer II will continue to fill the relevant vacancies.

Multipronged recruitment strategies were adopted last year to attract more talents who aspire to serve the community to join the Department, which achieved remarkable overall results. The total number of Assistant Officers II recruited in 2024 saw an increase of 18.6 per cent as compared with 290 in 2023.

In addition, the Department continued to work closely with different support service centres for ethnic minorities and schools last year. A variety of activities were organised to attract non-ethnic Chinese to apply for the vacancies of the CSD. In 2024, an additional 13 non-ethnic Chinese correctional officers were appointed. As at December 31, 2024, a total of 66 non-ethnic Chinese correctional officers were employed by the Department.

On staff training, to enhance patriotism and national security awareness among correctional officers, the Department continued to include training elements of national security, national education and patriotic education in the recruit training and training courses for serving staff, including inviting legal professionals and renowned scholars to host talks and sharing sessions, and arranging for correctional officers to visit the National Security Exhibition Gallery, the Patriotic Education Centre and the Chinese People's Liberation Army Hong Kong Garrison Exhibition Center at Ngong Shuen Chau Barracks, as well as organising study and exchange visits to the Mainland for correctional staff. In 2024, 130 related activities were organised by the Department with over 2 600 staff members participating in the activities.

#### (6) Application of innovation and technology

Last year, the Department continued to introduce innovation and technology projects to correctional facilities to assist the institutional management in enhancing management and operational efficiency and raising the security level of facilities. For example, the Department introduced the Second Generation Automatic Drone Patrol and Monitoring System to Tong Fuk Correctional Institution and implemented the Artificial Intelligence Coastal

## Surveillance System on Hei Ling Chau.

In addition, the Department continued its efforts to tie in with the Government's Smart City Blueprint by digitising its public services. The Approved Hand-in Articles e-Ordering Service was implemented in all correctional institutions last December, enabling relatives and friends of persons in custody to purchase approved hand-in articles for them via an online platform. The articles are directly delivered to the correctional institutions concerned by the supplier. The service not only reduces the time visitors spend sourcing the articles in the market and the inconvenience of carrying them to the correctional institutions, but also shortens the time for correctional officers to conduct security checks and handle the articles, thereby enhancing the operational efficiency of correctional institutions.

Meanwhile, the CSD launched two new technology projects, namely Digital Incarceration Proof and Chatbot Service, at the end of last year to bring convenience to the public. Members of the public may apply for the Digital Incarceration Proof through the "iAM Smart" mobile application, instead of having to visit the CSD Headquarters in person as in the past. Furthermore, the Chatbot Service is provided on the CSD website and its mobile application. Through the use of chatbot "Ching Ching" to handle public enquiries, the efficiency of the public enquiry service can be raised.

### (7) Deepening collaboration with the Mainland and international partners

The CSD has been fostering professional collaboration with the Mainland and overseas correctional institutions to establish close partnerships and create opportunities for co-operation on issues of mutual concern, making its best endeavours to tell good correctional stories and to tell good stories of Hong Kong.

The Department held the first Greater Bay Area Correctional Services Tactical Skills Competition in January this year, with the participation of seven teams from correctional organisations in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The event effectively facilitated the exchange of experiences in crisis management between the CSD and correctional organisations in the GBA, with a view to enhancing the tactical skills of the response teams and their emergency response capabilities.

Apart from fostering exchanges and connections within the GBA, the Department has also actively integrated into our country's Belt and Road Initiative. In March last year, the Department and the Hungarian Prison Service (with Hungary being the first European country to sign the Belt and Road co-operation agreement) signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Through formulating and promoting co-operation programmes including experience sharing in correctional services, personnel exchanges and joint research, the development of the two correctional authorities could be enhanced, and long-term co-operation relationship could be established, thereby deepening professional exchanges about international correctional services.

In November last year, the Department further enhanced its role as an



international link by hosting the 42nd Asian and Pacific Conference of Correctional Administrators. About 140 correctional chiefs and representatives from 30 Asia-Pacific countries and regions (including 16 Belt and Road countries) attended the Conference, themed "Collaboration for Sustainable and High-quality Development", to conduct professional exchanges about correctional services and the future development, with a view to strengthening and facilitating regional co-operation and further enabling counterparts from different places to gain a better understanding of the unique advantages and latest developments of Hong Kong's correctional system.

#### (8) Priorities in the coming year

Concluding its efforts made in 2024, the CSD achieved significant progress in various areas of its work. Looking forward, the Department will build on its success and seek changes while maintaining stability. We will continue to make innovations with professionalism in the three major areas of work, namely custodial work, rehabilitation and community education, with a view to making the CSD an internationally acclaimed correctional services institution.

On custodial work, following the successful organisation of the Greater Bay Area Correctional Services Tactical Skills Competition early this year, the CSD plans to set up the Hong Kong Correctional Services Response Tactics Training Base at Cape Collinson Correctional Institution to provide professional tactical skills training courses for officers of correctional institutions on the Mainland and overseas as well as local law enforcement officers to facilitate in-depth exchanges of response tactics and related skills between correctional institutions and professional law enforcement agencies in different jurisdictions and the CSD's response teams, thereby enhancing their professionalism and response capabilities to deal with prison emergencies.

The Department will continue to introduce elements of innovation and technology into correctional facilities to raise operational efficiency, enhance institutional security and strengthen the self-management ability of persons in custody. These include the installation of the Persons in Custody Integrated Intelligent Communication System, the Electric Locks Security System, the Movement and Location Monitoring System, the Smart Visitor Management System, etc, in different institutions progressively. Moreover, the Department plans to set up a Penal Lab at Cape Collinson Correctional Institution jointly with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation in the first half of this year, where tailor-made innovative solutions can be tested, so that more smart initiatives tailored for penal settings can be introduced to enhance operational efficacy and service quality of the Department.

Following the launch of the Social Visit e-Booking Service, the Department plans to introduce a new e-booking option for video social visits to enable relatives and friends of persons in custody to make appointments via the Department's webpage or its mobile application for video visits at the five Multi-purpose Family and Rehabilitation Service Centres located in

the urban area. The new service can not only enhance the operational efficiency of the Department but also bring convenience to relatives and friends of persons in custody.

As for rehabilitation work, the Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit will continue to carry out research studies in collaboration with local universities to promote evidence-informed rehabilitation services. The Unit plans to share its research findings with stakeholders and the public this year, including rehabilitated persons' desistance from re-offending, and the use of social media of young persons in custody before incarceration and its impact on their mental health, in the hope of providing guidance on the formulation of future strategies for rehabilitation and crime prevention work.

Moreover, to address the rehabilitation needs of persons in custody serving short-term prison sentences, the Department is in discussion with an NGO to provide with them one-stop rehabilitation support services during imprisonment and after release, which include assessments made by professional social workers, participation in personal growth sessions, and the establishment of a positive social network after release. Such services can help rehabilitated persons establish positive values, develop law-abiding awareness, explore personal strengths, build self-confidence and set life goals, thereby reducing their recidivism risk. Under the collaborative project, the Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit will carry out a three-year research project in collaboration with a local university and an NGO to track the rehabilitation situation of service users after release.

Furthermore, in view of the remarkable results of the Rehabilitation Dog Services Programme launched last year, the Department plans to conduct further studies with local universities and extend the programme to institutions for adult male persons in custody, with a view to benefitting more persons in custody in need.

As regards community education, the Department will strengthen youth education in terms of its breadth and depth to nurture young people into a new generation with law-abiding awareness and affection for our country and Hong Kong.

With regard to expanding the breadth of youth education, the Department will make greater effort to enhance its connection with schools in various districts to further increase the number of schools joining the school-based RPL programme to recruit more RPL trainees.

The Department will extend its collaboration with other departments to jointly organise more publicity activities to promote crime prevention and anti-drug messages. For example, in view of an escalating trend of taking "space oil drug", the Department will join hands with the Narcotics Division to organise the Creation and Rehabilitation Programme under the theme of "space oil drug" at Stanley Prison next month to disseminate anti-drug messages to participating students.

With regard to expanding the depth of youth education, to encourage young people to obtain an in-depth understanding of our country's overall development trend, the Department will provide RPL trainees with job tasting opportunities on the Mainland to enable them to establish Mainland networking and raise their understanding of the Mainland market to assist them in realising their life planning and seizing national development opportunities.

A microfilm premiere on national security will be held this April to deepen the dissemination of messages about national security and the importance of the rule of law among participating secondary students and members of youth uniformed groups.

Lastly, in order to enhance the promotion of correctional work and the dissemination of the message of support for offender rehabilitation to the general public, since January this year, the Correctional Services Department Sports Association (CSDSA) has operated an online gift sales platform for charity named "Made in Prison" (MIP), which aims to foster a caring heart in the community through the sale of handcraft products made by persons in custody to the public. The charity online gift sales platform is operated by the charity fund under the CSDSA. All proceeds from the sale, after deducting necessary costs, will be donated to various local registered charities, thereby promoting the development of the local charity industry as well as providing persons in custody with opportunities to contribute to society.

In its future development, the MIP will introduce more innovative green elements. The Department and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in early February this year, under which PolyU's patented technology for making 3D printing material with spent coffee grounds will be applied to the industrial production work performed by persons in custody. PolyU will also provide vocational training in product design for persons in custody to assist them in designing more environmentally friendly spent coffee grounds products, which will be available for sale on the MIP platform. The development of the platform signifies the CSD's sheer determination to care for the underprivileged, the environment and the community in an innovative way.

