

Regional flag day today

Three charities have been issued Public Subscription Permits to hold flag sales from 7am to 12.30pm today (December 14). They are, on Hong Kong Island, Hans Andersen Club Limited; in Kowloon, 1st Step Association Limited; and in the New Territories, Tin Shui Wai Women Association Limited, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Arrangements have been made with the charities to help people distinguish between the three flag-selling activities.

Information on the three flag-selling organisations on December 14 is as follows:

Region	Name of Organisation	Colour of Collection Bag	Colour of Flag
Hong Kong Island	Hans Andersen Club Limited	Orange	White
Kowloon	1st Step Association Limited	Orange	Orange
New Territories	Tin Shui Wai Women Association Limited	Pink	White

For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678. Information on flag days is available at the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_whatsnew) and the GovHK portal (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing contact information of the flag-selling organisations and information on the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_controlofc/sub_recentlyap). For enquiries about the detailed flag-selling arrangements, please contact the individual flag-selling organisations.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities covered by the Public Subscription Permit issued by the SWD have also been uploaded to the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/fundraising).

If any flag day activities are suspected to be fraudulent, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

SFETO supports premiere of “Mila” in San Francisco (with photos)

"Mila", a chamber opera presented by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, was performed in San Francisco, the United States on December 12 (San Francisco time). Called "quirky, quintessentially Hong Kong, and bold" by Time magazine, "Mila" explores the cultural richness and diversity of Hong Kong and was produced by an international cast and creative team from the US, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

Supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco (SFETO), a pre-performance reception was held to welcome the San Francisco audience. Addressing the audience before the performance, the Director of the SFETO, Mr Ivanhoe Chang, said this one-act opera has not only brought together a contemporary narrative that is pertinent in Hong Kong, but also promotes a meaningful cultural connection between East and West.

"Hong Kong is a dynamic and diverse cultural metropolis and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government is very committed to the development of the arts. Our office also strives to promote the cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and the western part of the US," Mr Chang said.

He thanked the Asia Society for taking the production to San Francisco. The four-member cast comprises Hong Kong-born sopranos Amanda Li and Joanna Shao, New York-based bass-baritone Joseph Beutel and Manila-based soprano Stefanie Quintin. The creative team includes American-born composer Eli Marshall, New York-based music director Neal Goren, award-winning playwright Candace Chong and Hong Kong theatre director Chan Chu-hei.



Five persons arrested for murder, taking part in a riot and wounding

Police arrested three men and two women, aged between 15 and 18, yesterday (December 13) in suspected connection with a murder case in Sheung Shui on November 13.

At noon on November 13, Police received a report from a passerby that a man was assaulted by someone with bricks outside 2 Lung Wan Street, Sheung Shui. The 70-year-old man was rushed to North District Hospital in unconscious state and later referred to Prince of Wales Hospital for treatment. The man was certified dead on the next day.

After investigation, the three men and two women were arrested in Sheung Shui and Tai Po for murder, taking part in a riot and wounding.

The five arrestees are being detained for further enquiries.

Investigation by the Regional Crime Unit of New Territories North is underway.

Correctional officer stops person in custody committing self-harm

A Correctional officer stopped a male person in custody from committing self-harm at Queen Mary Hospital Custodial Ward (QMHCW) today (December 13).

At 12.41pm today, the 60-year-old person in custody was found banging his forehead against a gate inside a ward of QMHCW. An officer immediately ordered him to stop the act and called for reinforcement. The person in custody was found conscious. Immediate treatment was provided to him by the medical staff of the hospital. A clinical psychologist of the department will follow up on the case.

A spokesman for the Correctional Services Department said, "The department uses all possible measures to prevent persons in custody from attempting suicide or self-harm. These measures include administrative arrangements, improvement of institution facilities, staff training and first aid services."

The person in custody was sentenced to imprisonment for the offence of burglary in January 2019.

Reported drug abusers in further decline but cannabis abusers rise by 8 per cent (with photos)

The Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) reviewed the local drug situation in the first three quarters of 2019 at its quarterly meeting today (December 13). The committee noted that while the total number of reported drug abusers decreased by nearly 20 per cent compared to the same period last year, there was a continued increase of reported cannabis abusers, and that the cannabis abuse problem among young abusers persists.

According to the latest figures from the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA), the total number of reported drug abusers in the first three quarters of 2019 decreased by 19 per cent (from 5,739 to 4,625) compared with the same period in 2018. The number of reported drug abusers aged under 21 also decreased by 10 per cent (from 383 to 346).

In the first three quarters of 2019, the total number of reported narcotic analgesic abusers dropped from 3,194 to 2,389, recording a 25 per cent decrease compared to the same period last year. The total number of reported psychotropic substance abusers (PSAs) also decreased by 13 per cent (from 3,263 to 2,849) compared to the same period last year. Among the newly reported cases, the number of PSAs (at 1,026) remained considerably higher than that of narcotic analgesic abusers (at 124).

Heroin remained the most common type of drug abused among all reported drug abusers, but the number of reported abusers decreased by 25 per cent (from 3,193 to 2,387) compared with the same period last year. Methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice") continued to be the most common type of psychotropic substance abused; the number of reported abusers decreased by 15 per cent (from 1,241 to 1,055) compared with the same period last year.

However, the number of reported cannabis abusers increased by 8 per cent (from 365 to 393). For reported young drug abusers aged under 21, cannabis continued to be the most common type of drug abused, followed by cocaine and "Ice". Compared to the same period last year, the number of reported cannabis abusers aged under 21 increased by 40 per cent (from 117 to 164), while that of reported cocaine and "Ice" abusers decreased by 32 per cent (from 211 to 144) and 28 per cent (from 71 to 51) respectively.

The number of newly reported drug abusers decreased by 14 per cent (from 1,353 to 1,169) compared with the same period last year. About half (48 per cent) were young adults aged between 21 and 35. The median history of drug abuse of newly reported abusers (i.e. the time for abusers to be reported to the CRDA by reporting agencies from their first drug abuse) was 5.6 years,

compared with 4.7 years in 2018, indicating that hidden drug abuse still requires attention.

The CRDA figures for the first three quarters of 2019 are available on the Narcotics Division's (ND) website (www.nd.gov.hk/en/index.htm).

The ACAN Chairman, Dr Ben Cheung, said, "The rise in the number of reported cannabis abusers, especially among young people aged under 21, remains a cause for concern. Cannabis is addictive and can cause serious harm to mental health, may induce anxiety and hallucination, and increase the risks of respiratory problems and cardiovascular diseases. Members of the public should correctly understand the harms of cannabis abuse, pursue a healthy lifestyle and refrain from drug temptations."

The Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Ivy Law, said, "Some overseas jurisdictions have earlier legalised the recreational use of cannabis, and have in recent months further broadened the scope of products that can contain cannabis. Products containing cannabis could appear in different forms, including food, drinks, topical products for applying to skin, hair or nails, as well as cannabis extract. These products may be available for sale in local stores of these jurisdictions. Members of the public should pay attention to the packaging labels of the products concerned while making purchases, and should not bring such products to Hong Kong to avoid breaching the law inadvertently."

After the meeting, Dr Cheung; the Chairman of the ACAN Sub-committee on Preventive Education and Publicity, Mr Chan Wing-kin; the Chairman of the ACAN Sub-committee on Treatment and Rehabilitation, Professor Cheung Yuet-wah; and Ms Law, with the support of the Vice-chairman of the District Fight Crime Committee (DFCC) (Wan Chai District), Mr Yeung Ka-shing, distributed anti-drug leaflets and souvenirs at the 54th Hong Kong Brands and Products Expo at Victoria Park to appeal to members of the public to remain vigilant and stay away from drugs, especially during the Christmas and New Year holidays. Persons coming across drug problems can seek help through the ND's instant messaging service 98 186 186 or 24-hour hotline 186 186.

Other participants at today's event included ACAN members Mr Chan Man-ho, Mr Fan Hoi-kit, Miss Li Ka-yan and Dr Annissa Lui; member of the ACAN Sub-committee on Preventive Education and Publicity Mr Ryan Wong; and member of the DFCC (Wan Chai District) Mr Lui Hon-fai.



