

Red flag hoisted at Silverstrand Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 12) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Silverstrand Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at the beach.

SHA's speech at Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2019 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, at the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum (ACCF) 2019 Ministerial Panel today (December 12):

Director Wang (the Director of the Palace Museum, Dr Wang Xudong), honourable ministers, heads of delegations, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. On behalf of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I welcome you to the Asia Cultural Co-operation Forum 2019. It is our great pleasure to meet old friends and welcome new ones who join this Forum for the first time.

This year's ACCF marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Since its inception in 2003, the ACCF has become the premier platform in Asia that brings together cultural ministers to share insights and experience in furthering arts and cultural development as well as collaboration. This year's ACCF is particularly unique as we have extended our reach beyond Asia, to bring to you cultural performances by artists from various cultural capitals in Asia and Europe. I am truly grateful for your support throughout all these years towards this 11th edition.

Located at the heart of Asia, Hong Kong is a gateway to the world. Having more than a thousand flights daily to over 220 destinations, Hong Kong is within five hours' flying time of half the world's population and four hours' flying time of most major cities in Asia. The new High Speed Rail, running from our city centre, conveniently connects us with the national high-speed rail network. Hong Kong has been and will remain an important city bridging cities and countries, as a hub for different cultures to meet, influence one another and evolve. The unique cultures and history in Hong

Kong present a dialogue that transcends time and bonds the East and the West.

Bonding East and West

As a melting pot of the eastern and western diverse cultures, Hong Kong has all along been active in international arts and cultural exchanges. The Government has progressively increased funding to support international artists and arts groups to present their productions in Hong Kong, and local artists to actively participate in the international art scene. We are endowed with vibrant cultural festivals in Hong Kong throughout the year, where more than 8 000 performances by local artists and artists from near and far are presented annually. Different training and internship schemes for arts administrators and artists to study and exchange experience with their counterparts around the globe.

Museum is one prime idea house where the display and exchange of wisdom can reach a broad spectrum of the public. Two weeks ago, we held the second Museum Summit in partnership with the British Museum where over 30 dedicated leading figures and professionals from renowned museums explored the redefinition of museums in the backdrop of technological advancement.

The strong cultural links between Hong Kong and countries across the world would not have been materialised without the support from the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China, as well as Consulates-General and Consulates in Hong Kong. I look forward to more cultural exchanges in the years to come.

Transcending Time

While Hong Kong is a modern and multicultural metropolitan, we cherish and strive to safeguard our unique Chinese cultural heritage. There are 480 items of intangible cultural heritage on the city's inventory – from social practices, rituals and festivals to traditional crafts and foods. A dedicated funding scheme has been set up for strengthening the preservation of intangible cultural heritage, to revitalise Chinese traditional culture by engaging audiences beyond the small enclave of specialists, and ensuring that our heritage will continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

Looking Ahead

Another round of exciting upgrades of Hong Kong's arts and cultural scene is taking shape. Stretching across 40 hectares of land, the West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the world's largest cultural projects blending arts, culture, education and public space. Major facilities include Xiqu Centre – a world-class arts venue dedicated to promoting the rich heritage of Chinese opera; M+ museum – one of the largest museums of modern and contemporary visual culture in the world; Hong Kong Palace Museum – a unique collaboration with the Palace Museum in Beijing to exhibit its extensive collection outside the Mainland on a long-term basis; Lyric Theatre Complex – a centre of excellence showcasing the best of Hong Kong and

international dance and theatre.

In addition to the West Kowloon Cultural District, the reopening of newly expanded Hong Kong Museum of Art two weeks ago and the East Kowloon Cultural Centre in 2021 will all provide world-class venues which gather the best artists and ideas from across the globe. We are all eager to present to you a well-equipped world-class cultural metropolis in your future visits.

Concluding Remarks

In the previous months, Hong Kong has been facing unprecedented difficulties, but we will remain resilient to overcome any challenges ahead. I believe that arts and culture transcend any boundaries and differences, where co-operation and mutual support will always prevail in strengthening people to people bonds and building inclusive societies. Once again, I'd like to express my sincere gratitude towards cultural ministers and representatives of participating countries for your continued support and contribution to the ACCF. I hope you will enjoy the visits and I look forward to our exchanges that would surely bring us closer together. Thank you.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rates in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Temporary closure of Hin Tin Swimming Pool

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

€€€€€The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (December 12) that due to suspension of water supply resulting from water pipe burst in the vicinity, Hin Tin Swimming Pool in Sha Tin District has been temporarily closed until further notice.

Singing contest spreads anti-drug messages

The final of the Anti-drug Supernova Singing Contest jointly organised by the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN), the Narcotics Division (ND) and Metro Radio was held tonight (December 11) at Music Zone @ E-Max in the Kowloonbay International Trade & Exhibition Centre. Nine young finalists made use of their singing skills to encourage young people to steadfastly pursue their dreams while developing healthy and drug-free lifestyles. In addition, pop singers and a music group urged members of the public to remain vigilant in standing firm against drug temptations, in particular during the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The Anti-drug Supernova Singing Contest offered promising young people who strive to become singers an opportunity to showcase their talents publicly and encouraged them to develop positive attitudes and stay away from drugs. The top three prize winners of the final were awarded audition contracts with a record company to help make their dreams come true.

The nine contestants who entered the final today are aged between 18 and 28. They reached the final by defeating other contenders during the six preliminary rounds of the singing contest in November. During the preliminary rounds of the singing contest, music professionals not only gave comments and guidance to all entrants but also shared with them information related to drug harms, relieving stress and channels for seeking anti-drug help.

Pop singers and a music group including Phil Lam, Alan Po, Mischa Ip, Jay Fung and Lil' Ashes were invited to tonight's event. Apart from performing for the audience and cheering for the contestants, the artistes also promoted anti-drug messages to the audience, including speaking on the harmful effects of taking cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine (commonly known as "Ice").

Noted music professionals Suzan Guterres, Samson Ling, Alan Cheung and Barry Ip were invited to be adjudicators of the contest. Aside from rating contestants and giving them advice on their singing skills, the adjudicators also encouraged them to stay positive when facing challenges and continue to pursue their dreams with passion and determination. An audience of more than 200, including young people from tertiary institutions and secondary schools as well as families and friends of the competitors, attended the

event. The enthusiastic cheering and chanting from the audience in support of the contenders raised the excitement of the occasion.

After rounds of intense competition, Michelle Siu and Emiko Tsui eventually won the champion and second runner-up awards respectively. Andy Lai was awarded the first runner-up and the Highest Popularity Award.

Guests attending tonight's event included the Chairman of the ACAN Subcommittee on Preventive Education and Publicity (PE&P SC), Mr Chan Wing-kin; PE&P SC member Professor James Chan; and the Commissioner for Narcotics, Ms Ivy Law.

In addition to the anti-drug singing contest held tonight, the ND and the ACAN in collaboration with Metro Radio also jointly held a series of anti-drug education and publicity activities from September to this month including an anti-drug seminar and radio interviews that targeted parents and focused on the drug harms of cannabis. Artistes and financial professionals also helped record anti-drug radio segments to enhance understanding and awareness of the drug problem among members of the public, and encourage listeners to stay away from drugs. The segments are being aired on both Metro Info and Metro Finance.