

# Correctional Services Department's 2020 Annual Review

Following is the 2020 Annual Review issued by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) today (April 28):

The violent incidents arising from the opposition to the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Amendment) and the COVID-19 epidemic have had significant impacts on and posed unprecedented challenges to Hong Kong's society. Despite the difficult times, staff of the CSD held fast to their duties and took resolute enforcement action to ensure institutional safety and stability. Various measures were also implemented to prevent the spread of the virus to correctional institutions.

## Custodial Work

### Number of Admissions and Penal Population

In the first half of 2020, court hearings were affected by the raging COVID-19 epidemic in Hong Kong, which indirectly resulted in a reduction in the annual number of admissions (including remands and convicted persons) in 2020, from 14 224 in 2019 to 11 967 in 2020, representing a decrease of 16 per cent. The average daily penal population at correctional facilities also decreased by 11 per cent from 7 737 persons in 2019 to 6 902 persons in 2020. The average daily occupancy rate was 62 per cent.

Among the 6 902 persons in custody mentioned above:

- (i) 72 per cent were sentenced persons and 28 per cent were remands;
- (ii) 81 per cent were males and 19 per cent were females;
- (iii) 96 per cent were aged 21 or above and 4 per cent were aged under 21; and
- (iv) 71 per cent were locals, 10 per cent were from the Mainland, Taiwan or Macao, and the remaining 19 per cent were from other countries.

It should be noted that as the legal proceedings of the cases in relation to the social disturbances were in progress, there was an increase in the number of remands. The average daily number of remands hit a decade high last year, from 1 436 in 2011 to 1 962 in 2020, representing an increase of 37 per cent. The highest single-day number of remands in 2020 stood at 2 195, representing an increase of 613 persons (39 per cent) when compared with the corresponding figure (1 582 persons) in 2011. The department expects that the relevant figures will remain high and have a further upward trend this year.

Further analysis showed that the average daily number of male remands

aged 21 or above registered the highest rise, from 1 023 in 2011 to 1 521 in 2020, representing an increase of 49 per cent, which is followed by female remands aged 21 or above, from 234 in 2011 to 281 in 2020, representing an increase of 20 per cent. The substantial increase in the number of remands aged 21 or above imposed a heavy burden on Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre and Tai Lam Centre for Women, resulting in the penal population frequently exceeding the admission capacity of both institutions. The department responded immediately and arranged for some remands to transfer in batches to Stanley Prison and Lo Wu Correctional Institution in an orderly manner. The CSD will closely monitor the changes in the penal population and deploy resources flexibly to relieve the burdens of individual reception centres.

In 2020, the number of admissions to correctional institutions for being involved in violent or unlawful acts arising from the opposition to the Amendment stood high at 422, with 181 of them being sentenced persons and the remaining 241 being remands. Among these 422 admissions:

- (i) 269 persons (64 per cent) were aged 21 or above, including 135 sentenced persons and 134 remands; and
- (ii) 153 persons (36 per cent) were aged under 21, including 46 sentenced persons and 107 remands.

Analysed by gender, 92 per cent (388 persons) of the admissions were males while only 8 per cent (34 persons) were female. They were involved in offences such as unlawful assembly, possession of an offensive weapon, arson and taking part in a riot.

Last year, 134 persons with a high security risk (i.e. Category A persons in custody) were admitted, with 55 of them being remands, an increase of 12 persons (28 per cent) as compared with 43 persons in 2019. Among these persons with a high security risk, two sentenced persons and 12 remands awaiting trial were involved in unlawful acts arising from the opposition to the Amendment.

## Safe Custody

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There has been no successful escape case in Hong Kong for 13 years in a row, from 2008 to 2020. Notwithstanding that there was a decline in the penal population in 2020 as compared with the 2019 figure, no reduction was observed in the number of disciplinary charges against persons in custody.

There were 10 cases of concerted acts of indiscipline in correctional institutions in 2020, representing an increase of three cases over 2019's figure. These acts of indiscipline mainly involved fighting among persons in custody and collective actions against the management measures of correctional institutions. The number of participants involved reached 125 in 2020, representing an increase of 32 per cent over the corresponding figure (95 participants) in 2019. Further analysis revealed that about 70 per cent of persons in custody involved in concerted acts of indiscipline in 2020 had triad backgrounds.

Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre recorded the highest number of cases of concerted acts of indiscipline in 2020, with six cases involving 60 persons in custody. Four of the cases involved fighting among persons in custody or collective actions against the management measures of the institution, while the other two cases were misconduct of remand persons in custody after drinking alcoholic beverages.

Furthermore, the number of disciplinary charges against persons in custody was 4 332, representing an increase of 11 per cent over 3 905 in 2019. 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 30 per cent, 28 per cent and 15 per cent of the total number of disciplinary charges respectively. In 2020, there were 2 488 persons in custody subject to disciplinary charges, representing an increase of 85 persons as compared with 2 403 persons in 2019. Among the 2 488 persons in custody subject to disciplinary charges, 412 committed three or more disciplinary offences, involving 1 790 disciplinary charges, which accounted for 41 per cent of the total number of disciplinary charges. One of them was even subject to 22 disciplinary charges.

A total of 423 cases involving violent acts were recorded in 2020, representing an increase of 21 cases (5 per cent) as compared with 402 cases in 2019. These cases mainly involved fighting among persons in custody and assaulting others.

Among the 423 cases, 24 cases of a more serious nature were referred to the Police for follow-up, representing a decrease of seven cases from the 2019 figure. The number of correctional officers who were injured while stopping violent acts was reduced to 11, representing a decrease of nine officers from the number in 2019.

A total of 65 self-harm cases committed by persons in custody were recorded in 2020, representing a substantial increase of 48 per cent (21 cases) as compared with 44 cases in 2019. The increase in the above cases was mainly attributed to cases involving remands, which rose by 14 cases (58 per cent) from 24 cases in 2019 to 38 cases in 2020. Self-harm cases committed by female remands saw the greatest increase, from nine cases in 2019 doubling to 18 cases in 2020. Regarding these 18 cases, three persons in custody had engaged in self-harm behaviours two or more times, constituting nine cases in total. While the vast majority of the above cases were discovered in time and the persons in custody concerned were successfully rescued by correctional officers, two persons in custody died despite rescue efforts in 2020. The cases have been referred to the Police for investigation and subsequent death inquests will be conducted.

#### Expanding the Establishment of Regional Response Teams (RRTs) and Strengthening Equipment

To enhance the readiness for emergencies, the department has been maintaining high vigilance, expanding the establishment and scale of the

RRTs, and building up their capability to combat riots with a view to maintaining order and security of correctional institutions. The coverage of the RRTs has been expanded from the existing three regions, namely Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and Lantau Island, to include Hei Ling Chau and individual large-scale correctional institutions such as Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre, Stanley Prison, Shek Pik Prison and Lo Wu Correctional Institution.

Being forceful and assertive, the RRTs are able to arrive at the scenes swiftly to quell disturbances and prevent any incidents from deteriorating. In 2020, the RRTs were deployed to take part in 33 cases involving providing support for maintaining institutional security, and 302 cases involving high-risk escort duties.

### Stepping Up Law Enforcement in Institutions

The CSD has redeployed resources and strengthened its intelligence network to ensure a safe and secure custodial environment. In 2020, the CSD conducted a total of 9 662 joint search/special search/night raid operations in institutions, covering 16 094 locations, representing increases of 11 per cent and 13 per cent respectively as compared with the corresponding figures in 2019.

The CSD is committed to stopping the smuggling of drugs into correctional institutions. In 2020, there were 14 cases of seized drugs, including seven cases of body-cavity concealment of drugs. The majority of the seized drugs was heroin and the cases mainly involved newly admitted persons in custody.

### Escorting Persons in Custody

Despite the reduction in the average daily penal population in 2020, the demand for medical and healthcare treatment from persons in custody and the number of regular follow-up appointments arranged for them at public hospitals have remained high owing to various factors including the ageing population, the prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, and a large number of persons in custody with a history of drug abuse. In 2020, the figure in this regard stood at 40 000 man days, similar to that of 2019.

Apart from performing medical escort duties, correctional officers are also required to escort persons in custody to courts for hearings. In 2020, about 32 744 court escorts were performed by correctional officers, and the highest single-day number of court escort cases reached 273, representing a substantial increase of 62 per cent as compared with the highest single-day number of 169 cases in 2019. The increase in the number of escort cases put a great strain on manpower resources and significantly increased the security risk.

### United as One to Stop the Violence and Fight the Virus

Hong Kong saw incessant riots in 2019. Apart from staying committed to

maintaining prison order, the department also deployed correctional officers to take up appointment as Special Constables, so that they could contribute to society by assisting the Government in stopping violence and curbing disorder.

In early 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic presented another formidable challenge to the CSD. The special physical settings in prisons make it easier for infectious diseases to be transmitted quickly within institutions, which could lead to grim consequences. Since mid-January 2020, the department has strengthened the cleansing and disinfection work at full scale, and activated the Three-tier Medical Response System to detect, isolate and handle high-risk cases. Innovative technologies have also been introduced to the cleansing and disinfection work in order to enhance personal and environmental hygiene, thereby minimising the risk of spreading the disease inside institutions and cutting the virus transmission chain as soon as possible. In 2020, although some sporadic confirmed cases were recorded in correctional institutions, the further spreading of the virus within the institutions was prevented with front-line staff acting in unison and making swift responses in accordance with the response system.

At the onset of the epidemic, there was a dire shortage of filter masks. Operating the only production line of filter masks in Hong Kong at the time, the department immediately extended its production to round-the-clock production. As correctional staff were keen on supporting the community's fight against the virus, over 2 500 off-duty and retired officers were recruited within a short period of time to work in shifts on a voluntary basis in Lo Wu Correctional Institution for mask production. With the concerted effort of various community stakeholders, mask production was significantly ramped up, which contributed greatly to the Government's battle against the epidemic. Currently, to support the anti-epidemic work of other government departments, the CSD has not only set up additional production lines of filter masks, but also consolidated its existing resources to establish production lines in Lo Wu Correctional Institution and Tai Lam Correctional Institution for manufacturing personal protective equipment (PPE) like disposable isolation gowns, disposable caps and protective face shields. Persons in custody are given the opportunity to contribute to society by participating in the production of PPE.

Moreover, in the first quarter of 2021, the department deployed staff members as required to assist residents within the specified "restricted areas" to undergo compulsory testing. It is hoped that the general public would stand united to help Hong Kong win the battle against the pandemic as soon as possible, thereby bringing lives back to normal.

## Rehabilitation

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## Psychological Services

With a concerted effort of the department's clinical psychologists, breakthroughs were made in various areas of psychological counselling last

year.

Following the establishment of the Psy Gym in Lo Wu Correctional Institution for female persons in custody, the department also set up the Life Gym, the positive living centre for male persons in custody, in Stanley Prison, which marked a new milestone in the department's development of gender-specific psychological treatment. The Life Gym offers the first psychological treatment programme in Asia tailored to meet the characteristics of male persons in custody. Participants include persons in custody who committed violent offences. Through intensive psychological treatments, the participants are able to relieve their anger and resolve disputes through rational communication, which will help them desist from re-offending and develop a positive lifestyle.

Given the social situation in recent years, a large number of young people who were involved in violent or unlawful acts arising from the opposition to the Amendment have been admitted to correctional institutions. Apart from the existing counselling programme named the Offending Behaviour Programme, the CSD is actively planning to establish a Youth Lab to provide a spiritual space for young persons in custody to undergo psychological rehabilitation and rebuilding, adjust their mode of thinking and enhance their law-abiding awareness. The initiative will be put into a trial run in Pik Uk Correctional Institution, and subject to its effectiveness, it will be progressively extended to other correctional institutions.

For adult persons in custody, clinical psychologists have also designed the Violence Prevention Programme for voluntary participation by persons in custody who committed serious violent offences. Through systematic psychological assessment, the programme enables participants to understand the risk of re-offending and learn the skills of anger management, rational communication and conflict resolution. Moreover, clinical psychologists are proactively developing a family psychological treatment programme aiming to rebuild family relationships to help persons in custody cultivate positive living attitudes and reduce their violent thinking. At the same time, to address the youth violence problem arising from the social events in recent years, the CSD and the Hong Kong Police Force have jointly launched the Walk with YOUTH Programme, under which the City University of Hong Kong has been commissioned to conduct a study entitled "Understanding the social cognitive processes in incarcerated youths" with a view to designing more effective rehabilitation programmes for young offenders.

After bringing mindfulness into drug addiction treatment in Nei Kwu Correctional Institution, the department launched the first mindfulness-based psychological drug addiction treatment centre for male persons in custody at Hei Ling Chau Drug Addiction Treatment Centre – Mindfulness Place. Incorporated with the elements of mindfulness, the treatment programme aims to assist persons in custody in early identification of negative emotions and craving, and in enhancing self-control so as to prevent relapses.

Multi-purpose Family and Rehabilitation Service Centre

The CSD is currently operating a counselling centre in Mong Kok to provide psychological and counselling services to discharged persons under supervision, and offer a limited video visit service. To enhance psychological and counselling services and to extend the video visit service of correctional institutions, the department started planning last year for the establishment of four multi-purpose family and rehabilitation service centres on Hong Kong Island and in New Territories North, New Territories West and New Territories East. These centres are expected to start operation by the end of this year. A community-based Change Lab tailored for young people will also be set up in one of these centres. The Change Lab, which will be under the charge of clinical psychologists, will provide specialised psychological counselling service for young people serving a binding-over order to enhance their resilience, and liaise with their parents and families to help them build positive family relationships under family support, with a view to guiding them to lead a positive life throughout their life journey.

## Education

The department has launched an educational initiative entitled Understanding History is the Beginning of Knowledge to assist young persons in custody to learn history, enhance their sense of national identity, help them reflect on the meaning of life and guide them back on the right track. Through diversified educational activities including scholar talks, virtual reality history learning activities, learning history through e-sports activities, and history and culture workshops on topics such as Cantonese opera, diabolo tricks and papermaking, young persons in custody can learn about the long history and rich culture of China in an interesting way, so as to arouse their interest in learning history.

With the Education Officers of the Education Unit of the department making their utmost effort to overcome the obstacles, classes for young persons in custody in correctional institutions continued despite the epidemic. In 2020, the overall passing rate of persons in custody in public examinations was 57 per cent and nine adult persons in custody were awarded a bachelor's degree.

## Industrial Production

With regard to the work arrangement for persons in custody, the CSD has proactively introduced high-end computerised production facilities to enhance the quality of products, raise production efficiency, and enable persons in custody to acquire up-to-date production skills and common knowledge. In the past year, the department introduced the 3D body scanner and printer to Pak Sha Wan Correctional Institution, the Automatic Robotic Welding and Inspection System to Tai Lam Correctional Institution, and the first vacuum lifter and crane system to Pik Uk Prison. The introduction of these facilities not only enables persons in custody to receive market-oriented training, but also enhances production efficiency and product quality, promotes operational automation and raises the level of occupational safety and health. Currently, the department is actively planning to convert the Carpentry Workshop in Pik Uk Prison into an intelligent automated production

line to produce government office furniture.

## Vocational Training

In respect of vocational training, about 40 market-oriented courses with a total of over 1 400 training places are currently provided for adult persons in custody in various correctional facilities. Last year, the CSD collaborated with local training bodies to organise courses on 3D designing and printing skills, and specialty cake making. Virtual reality elements are incorporated into various training courses which include the virtual reality forklift truck operation training offered by the Logistics Management Course, the Course on Virtual Reality Visual Merchandising and Retail Management, and the Course on Virtual Reality Welding. Persons in custody can enrol in these courses on a voluntary basis to acquire up-to-date skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing their employability and facilitating their reintegration into society after release.

The CSD will, in collaboration with various training bodies, continue to regularly review and introduce diversified and market-oriented vocational training courses having regard to the overall situation of the local employment market and labour demand. In addition, the department will proactively introduce innovation and technology courses, such as a course on Virtual Reality Interior Design to be introduced this year. The vocational training courses aim to help rehabilitated persons find jobs and enrol in bridging or progressive courses in future.

## Community Education

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The CSD expanded the establishment of the uniformed group Rehabilitation Pioneer Leaders (RPL) in 2020 by increasing the number of districts from two (Hong Kong Island, and Kowloon and the New Territories) to three (Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories), with the number of target participants being raised from about 100 to about 150. However, the implementation of the project was postponed to 2021 due to the epidemic situation and school suspension.

Although the implementation of community education activities by the CSD was seriously hindered by the COVID-19 epidemic, an innovative initiative, "RPL chit-chat", was launched during school suspension. Crime prevention talks and interviews on life planning were held several times through online platforms and a number of videos were broadcast to enable youngsters to obtain crime prevention and rehabilitation information at home, with a view to keeping up the momentum of community education.

In addition, the department and the Care of Rehabilitated Offenders Association has co-organised a brand-new adventure-based educational programme named "Mission in Prison". Through the active participation of students in the novel experiential activities on correctional work, the messages of "leading a law-abiding and drug-free life as well as supporting offender rehabilitation" can be disseminated to them, and the public



understanding of correctional work can be enhanced.

## Recidivism Rate

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The recidivism rate (i.e. the percentage of re-admission of local sentenced persons to correctional institutions following conviction for a new offence within two years after discharge) decreased from 24.8 per cent in the discharge year of 2017 to 22.5 per cent in 2018, which was the lowest on record. The department will continue to unite all sectors of the community to create a harmonious social environment conducive to rehabilitated persons' re-integration into society.

## Human Resources

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In 2019-20, a total of 54 Officers and 309 Assistant Officers II were recruited. It is expected that in 2020-21, around 50 Officers will be recruited, and the year-round recruitment for the post of Assistant Officer II will continue to fill the existing vacancies.

Furthermore, established in August 2019, the Ethnic Minorities Relation Team is committed to implementing Project NOVA, under which life planning workshops, visits to the CSD's Staff Training Institute, physical fitness training classes and career interview workshops have been organised. The project has attracted over 100 non-ethnic Chinese youngsters to apply for CSD vacancies, and four of them (three males and one female) were granted the offer of appointment as Assistant Officer II. They all reported for duty at correctional institutions in the middle and the second half of 2020.

## Development of Smart Prison Protocol

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The department has been actively developing the Smart Prison protocol since 2018. Various technology projects have been rolled out in several correctional institutions under four major system categories for strategic development, namely "Security and Monitoring System", "Operation and Management System", "Person in Custody Self-management System" and "Staff Capacity Enhancement System", with a view to raising management efficiency, the level of security of correctional institutions and the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes.

With reference to the experience gained from the trial runs of technology projects over the past two years, the CSD has been making modifications, introducing new elements and conducting system integration so as to convert Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution into a first-generation smart prison that is expected to come into operation again in mid-2021.

To facilitate the long-term development of the Smart Prison protocol, the department has been actively enhancing the quality of staff training, which includes establishing the e-Staff Training Institute. Through the

introduction of the element of technology, a different mode of teaching and training is adopted under which correctional staff can obtain authentic learning experiences in various simulated institutional settings so as to strengthen colleagues' capability in law enforcement and enhance their self-confidence, as well as encourage trainees to participate actively in the future development of smart prisons.

### Correctional Services Department Headquarters Building

The CSD obtained the funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on December 16, 2020, for the construction of the Correctional Services Department Headquarters Building at Shing Tai Road, Chai Wan, to enhance its operational efficiency and facilitate future development. The project has already commenced in the first quarter of 2021 and will be completed in the fourth quarter of 2024.

### Redevelopment of Correctional Institutions and Facilities Improvement Works

As the number of adult male remands has been on the increase, Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre with its existing facilities is under tremendous strain and hence overcrowding is prevalent in the centre. The CSD has proposed the in-situ partial redevelopment of the institution to increase its capacity by 410 places and improve its existing correctional facilities. The project has been approved by the Town Planning Board, and the department will seek funding support according to the existing mechanism.

In addition, non-emergency works in correctional institutions were temporarily suspended due to the grim epidemic situation last year, but the overall works progress was unaffected.

### 100th Anniversary of the CSD

December 31, 2020, marked 100 years since the CSD formally became independent from the Police Force. In 2020, the department joined hands with various sectors of the community to organise a series of celebration and publicity events under the theme of "A Century of Corrections Connecting a Smart Future". Apart from the Kick-off Ceremony of Celebration Events cum Carnival for 100th Anniversary of CSD, the CSD published a series of thematic stories about the department in a magazine to introduce to the public its way forward. Furthermore, the department also held the 100th Anniversary Hundred Kilometer Team Challenge and co-organised blood donation activities with the Hong Kong Red Cross, and more. However, as affected by the COVID-19 epidemic, most of the other activities had to be postponed.

In addition, the CSD and the Hong Kong Police Force have jointly launched the Walk with YOUTH Programme to disseminate law-abiding messages to young persons in custody and instil positive values in them. The programme includes a series of activities to be held inside correctional institutions

with the assistance of volunteers from both departments.

## Conclusion

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The correctional system in Hong Kong has been evolving to keep pace with the development of society. The department would like to extend its heartfelt gratitude to all correctional officers, community stakeholders and various organisations for their unfailing support over the years. The CSD also calls on the public to continue to support its correctional work and accept rehabilitated persons, thus helping them return to the right track.