In 2013 99 kg of methamphetimines the drug ‘ice’ was seized. In 2014 the seizure of ‘ice’ increased by 49% with 202 kg in the first same period in 2013. Ketamine and cannabis seizures rose 71% and 77% respectively.

It was reported more teenagers were being used for smuggling drugs as the city’s trendy dance music scene, “fing tao” triad bars and traditional night time entertainment grows. It is threatening local youngster’s lives due to the perception that drugs are ‘fun’ not addictive nor dangerous.

In the 1960s heroin addiction exploded around the world with No.3 heroin for ‘chasing the dragon,’ China White No.4 (‘sei jai’) addict’s favourite for injection traded by criminals in Holland with its Chinese Far East affiliates. In 1962 to 1965 the writer was fortunate to be a member of the small band of police staff working in the Narcotics Bureau known as “Sap Ng Lau” Li Po Chun Chambers just opposite the Fire Boat Pier.

The Narcotics Bureau was headed then by Detective Senior Superintendent Alfred Baggott. (later John Browett) and Detective Superintendent C. Stevens. There were three Detective Senior Inspectors; Kong Yiu Wing, Lam Mak Sing and Tony Rice investigating the illegal manufacture, import and export of dangerous drugs. These officers were supported by Detective Sergeant Hui, one Detective Corporal and four Detective Police Constables and one Detective Woman Police Constable. Two Detective Inspectors John Griffiths and Brian Coak worked under Detective Senior Inspector J.P. MacMahon deployed investigating Kowloon and Hong Kong Island street level drug selling syndicates. They were supported by one Detective Corporal and one Women Police Constable and four Detective Police Constables. The civilian staff of typists and two interpreters Mr. Hui & Mr. Yen was headed by a Senior Executive Officer Mr. Len Smith.

The main seizure of illicit narcotic drugs and arrest during that period was the “Bamboo” case a ton of opium and 40 lbs of morphine well wrapped and concealed among the import of bamboo by ship from Thailand. It was the largest seizure of narcotics in the world at that time. Three were arrested, convicted and imprisoned but their leader escaped to Thailand. The perpetrator foolishly slipped into Hong Kong a few years later but he was arrested by Narcotics Bureau Officer John Hazelden.

The writer on 6 September 2014 fifty two years later after I was a member of the Narcotics Bureau from 1962 to 1965 visited the current exhibition Narcotics Bureau 60th Anniversary at the Jockey Club Drug Info Centre Queensway. Recalling seizing opium pipes, arresting and prosecuting street level heroin syndicate members and ‘putting them away’. I recall while investigating a heroin syndicate in Wanchai. We arrested a 14 year old girl heroin mainline addict used by the syndicate. Within one hour of her arrest the girl vomited and shivering in withdrawal symptoms. Later the Wanchai syndicate raid led by J.P. MacMahon and his NB team successfully wiped out the group of dangerous drug dealers.
Establishment of the Narcotics Bureau

Before the establishment of the Narcotics Bureau, there was a central organization in the Hong Kong Police Force for the prevention and detection of corrupt practices in the Colony, namely the Anti-Corruption Branch. In view of the growing menace of the illicit drug trade and allied corruption, the need for a unit to ensure that vigorous and coordinated action be taken to remedy the situation was recognized by the Government. The Narcotics Bureau, as one of the divisions under the organizational structure of the Anti-Corruption Branch, was formed in 1954. The initial manpower of the Bureau upon its creation was only one Assistant Superintendent assisted by two Constables.

The new drug - heroin, had soon found favor with opium addicts and became a favourable drug in the illicit drug market for various reasons. It was more profitable for the supplier and more affordable for the consumer. Moreover, it was easier to smuggle. In Hong Kong, heroin abuse was first noticed in 1927 in the form of heroin pills, and initially being taken orally but later they were smoked in a manner similar to opium.

In the 1960s, drug traffickers mainly relied on sea route to smuggle drugs from Thailand and other places to Hong Kong. Heroin normally came from the Golden Triangle, and had been smuggled across the land border or by sea route from Yunnan, eventually to Guangdong. Until the late 1960s, morphine was being shipped into Hong Kong for processing No.3 heroin which was often mixed with barbitone for smoking or “Chasing the dragon”.

In the late-1960s, the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance which was originally enacted in the mid-1920s was strengthened, introducing Life Imprisonment as the maximum penalty for trafficking drugs.

In 1960, the idea of "Chasing the dragon" was introduced. The idiom "Chasing the dragon" was the description of an addicted person smoking - several grains of heroin mixed with a base in a folded piece of tissue, held in the mouth by a taper, the resins being inhaled through a hole of bamboo or rolled paper. The fumes move up and down the bough with the movements of motion powder and resemble undulating tail of the dragon in Chinese mythology.

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In the 1960s, drug traffickers relied on the sea route to smuggle drugs from Thailand and other places to Hong Kong. However, in view of stringent enforcement actions, drug traffickers had come up with other means to smuggle drugs into and out of Hong Kong. Small shipments were smuggled across the land border, normally by lorry drivers and by couriers on foot across the Shenzhen–Lo Wu border.

In 1969, the Narcotics Bureau carried out several significant international drug law enforcement actions and seized large amounts of illegal drugs. Several notorious international traffickers were charged, convicted, and eventually sentenced to lengthy custodial sentences. As a result of the crackdown on major Hong Kong syndicates and drug dealers, Hong Kong's role as a drug trading centre had gradually diminished.

In order to cope with the increasing workload on combating drug activities, the Bureau strengthened its manpower from only three officers to more than 200 officers, and moved into a new office at May House at Police Headquarters in 1973. The Bureau occupied the 9th and 10th floors of May House. Sometimes syndicates would send their agents to check on the movements of the Narcotics Bureau officers before landing a shipment. However, confined by the "Sap Cog Law" or 15th floor nickname of the Bureau, the undertakers would spend hours at times observing a series of May House.

5

Based architecturally on the Headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the US, the 21-storey tower was completed in 1975. The tower was designed to accommodate the expanding needs of the Bureau. The building was named "May House", after Charles May, the first Chief Superintendent when the Police Force was officially commissioned in the 1840s. After Charles May, the first Captain Superintendent when the Police Force was officially commissioned in the 1840s, the building was named "May House" after Charles May. However, after the completion of the new building, the police force was officially commissioned in 1975.
1980

Entering the 1980s, heroin continued to dominate the drug market in Hong Kong. As the purity of no. 3 heroin had dropped dramatically from 30% to 5% throughout the decade, no. 3 heroin was gradually replaced by the high purity no. 14 heroin.

During the 1980s, the Narcotics Bureau of Hong Kong continued to focus on heroin, with police operations resulting in the destruction of large quantities of heroin. For example, in 1982, a major heroin operation was made in Kowloon, and in 1983, a large heroin factory was seized in the New Territories.

1984

Heroin base found on the shoreline.

1988

Operation "CLINKER" was a joint Narcotics Bureau - Australian Federal Police operation that resulted in 4.43 kg of no. 4 heroin being seized from a yacht in Pei Jao Island. The large quantity of heroin seized was the largest in Hong Kong at the time.

1990

On 3rd July 1990, the largest seizure of heroin in Hong Kong to date was made, with 425 kg of no. 4 heroin being seized from a warehouse in Kowloon. This seizure was the second largest in the world at that time.

1994

1998

A major heroin operation was made in early 1990s, with over 1,000 kg of heroin seized in Kowloon. This operation was the largest in Hong Kong's history.

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Although heroin continued to dominate the drug market in Hong Kong, the government, with the assistance of the police and community groups, continued to work towards reducing the use and supply of heroin.
NB KEEP UP THE GOOD FIGHT ON DANGEROUS DRUGS TO PROTECT OUR YOUTH!

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