Reply Serial No.

SB225

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 0440)

Head: (30) Correctional Services Department

Subhead (No. & title):   ( )

Programme: (1) Prison Management

Controlling Officer: Commissioner of Correctional Services (YAU Chi-chiu)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Security

Question:

As the occupancy rate of prisons is estimated to reach 80.4% in 2016, what are the concrete plans of the Government to enhance the accommodation of prisons to avoid overcrowding?

Asked by: Hon Dennis KWOK (Member Question No. 6)

Reply:

As shown from the statistics in the past 5 years, the occupancy rate of prisons under the Correctional Services Department (CSD) gradually decreased from 91.1% in 2011 to 79.2% in 2014 and thereafter slightly increased to 79.9% in 2015.   It is estimated to be 80.4% in 2016.

CSD is required to classify and assign persons in custody (PICs) to different institutions according to such factors as gender, age, status (i.e. convicted inmates or remands, first-time offenders or repeated offenders), length of sentence, types of sentence, criminal background, risk of escape and security level in order to achieve effective management.   As such, although the occupancy rate of some institutions has slightly decreased, the occupancy rate of some others still remains high.   Generally speaking, given the large number of adult remands, the reception centres, for example, Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre (LCKRC), Tai Lam Centre for Women (TLCW) and Siu Lam Psychiatric Centre, are more crowded (with an average occupancy rate of 100% or above in 2015) than other institutions.

CSD has been keeping a close watch on changes in the size and composition of the penal population and deploying resources flexibly to cater for the custodial and rehabilitation needs of PICs.   On this basis, CSD has all along been implementing various improvement measures, including the swapping of functions of individual institutions where practicable, the conversion and upgrading of correctional institutions, etc. The major projects and resources redeployment schemes carried out in recent years include:

(a) Lo Wu Correctional Institution was redeveloped and came into operation in 2010. With its 1 400 penal places, the overcrowding problem in most female correctional institutions has been relieved;

(b) the amalgamation of the former Lai Chi Kok Correctional Institution and the nearby LCKRC were completed in early 2012 and provided about 400 additional penal places;

(c) some of the facilities in Lai Chi Rehabilitation Centre (LCRC) and Sha Tsui Correctional Institution (STCI) were swapped in March 2014 to better utilise the correctional facilities and relieve the overcrowding situation of Pik Uk Prison. The existing LCRC is renamed as Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution (TGCI), whereas part of the facilities in STCI is renamed as LCRC;

(d) improvement works of some of the facilities in Tai Lam Correctional Institution (TLCI) were completed at the end of 2014 and elderly PICs serving sentence in Ma Hang Prison (MHP) were transferred to TLCI in January 2015. MHP has been vacated and used for staff training and community education purposes;

(e) Nei Kwu Correctional Institution has provided 56 additional penal places for adult female drug addicts since March 2015;

(f) in early January 2016, some of the adult PICs with potential higher security risk were transferred from Hei Ling Chau Addiction Treatment Centre to Lai Sun Correctional Institution, in which they were detained in a separate area. Security measures are strengthened and the existing resources are better redeployed with flexibility; and

(g) TLCW is undergoing partial redevelopment and the project is expected to be completed at the end of 2016. By then, an additional 108 penal places will be provided.

CSD will continue to study other improvement proposals to tackle the problems of ageing facilities and overcrowding in some of the correctional institutions, particularly in the reception centres, and cater for the custodial and rehabilitation needs of PICs.

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