

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 5218)

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:

Relatives of persons in custody often complained that the visit rooms in various correctional institutions being rather small and the waiting time too long. In 2016-17, will the Government increase the provision for expansion of the visit rooms in correctional institutions for the convenience of the relatives of persons in custody? Besides, will the number and duration of the visits in each month be increased in order to facilitate the communication between persons in custody and their relatives?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung (Member Question No. 294)

Reply:

Among the 29 correctional facilities, 13 have been in operation for 40 years or more at the end of 2015. The Correctional Services Department (CSD) has all along been implementing different measures, including the conversion or improvements of the correctional institutions, to address the problem of ageing facilities. For example, Lo Wu Correctional Institution, which was redeveloped and commissioned in 2010, provides more visit rooms with better environment and a visitor registration centre. The scope of works of the partial redevelopment project now being carried out in Tai Lam Centre for Women also includes improvement of visiting facilities. Moreover, CSD has been working with the Architectural Services Department to construct, maintain or upgrade various facilities in institutions having regard to their conditions and priorities. For example, the construction of a Central Visit Room Complex at Hei Ling Chau and the conversion of visit rooms in Tai Lam Correctional Institution are expected to complete in 2017 and at the end of 2016 respectively. Furthermore, a tender exercise for the improvement works of the intercom system of visit rooms at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre is now underway and the works are expected to complete at the end of 2016.

Persons in custody can keep in touch with their relatives and friends by different means, generally by letters and social visits. Regarding the number and duration of social visits, Rule 48 of the Prison Rules stipulates that all convicted persons in custody are allowed to receive 2 social visits from their relatives and friends each month, during which no more

than 3 persons will be allowed at one time, and the visits will be limited to 30 minutes on each occasion. Rule 203 of the Prison Rules prescribes that every person in custody awaiting trial is allowed to receive 1 social visit from their relatives and friends each day, during which no more than 2 persons will be allowed at one time, and the visit will be limited to 15 minutes. CSD shares the view that it will have a positive bearing on persons in custody's rehabilitation if they can get support and care from their relatives and friends, especially their immediate family members. As such, CSD encourages them to stay in close touch with their immediate family members. CSD will generally allow convicted persons in custody to receive additional monthly visits from their immediate family members if necessary. Besides, persons in custody can also maintain communication with their relatives and friends by letters, or apply to correctional officers to communicate with their relatives and friends by phone when necessary.

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