

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

(Question Serial No. 4963)

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 are rather small and the waiting time is too long. In 2017-18, 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? Also, 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. 147)

Reply:

Among the 29 correctional facilities, 13 have been in operation for 40 years or more at the end of 2016. 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 partial redevelopment works completed at the end of 2016 in Tai Lam Centre for Women also include 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 is expected to complete at the end of 2017. The improvement works of the intercom system of visit rooms at Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre and the conversion of visit rooms at Tai Lam Correctional Institution were completed at the end of 2016 and in February 2017 respectively.

Persons in custody (PICs) 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 (Cap. 234A) stipulates that all convicted PICs 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. CSD agrees that it will have a positive bearing on PICs' 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 the number of monthly visits from immediate family members to be increased if convicted PICs make such requests. Rule 203 of the Prison Rules prescribes that every PIC 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. Besides, PICs 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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