

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

SB504

(Question Serial No. 5846)

Head: (30) Correctional Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (1) Prison Management

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

Director of Bureau: Not specified

Question:

Relatives of persons in custody often complained that the number of the visits is insufficient and the duration is too short in various correctional institutions. In 2017-18, will the Government increase the number of visits by relatives of persons in custody from 2 times to 4 times each month in all correctional institutions in order to facilitate the communication between persons in custody and their relatives as it is conducive to rehabilitation?

Asked by: Hon YIU Chung-yim (Member Question No. 89)

Reply:

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. The Correctional Services Department (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.