

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

SB390

(Question Serial No. 5831)

Head: (30) Correctional Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): ()

Programme: (1) Prison Management

Controlling Officer: Commissioner of Correctional Services (WOO Ying-ming)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Security

Question:

Relatives of persons in custody often complained that the visit rooms in various correctional institutions are too small and the waiting time is too long. In 2018-19, 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 TAM Man-ho, Jeremy (LegCo internal reference no.: 568)

Reply:

Among the newly constructed and redeveloped correctional facilities (for example Lo Wu Correctional Institution which was redeveloped and commissioned in 2010 and the partial redevelopment works completed at the end of 2016 in Tai Lam Centre for Women), the Correctional Services Department (CSD), in collaboration with the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD), has provided more visit rooms with better environment and a visitor registration centre. Moreover, CSD has been working with ArchSD to increase, maintain or replace various facilities in institutions having regard to their conditions and priorities, including improvement of the following visiting facilities: the improvement works of the intercom system of visit rooms in Lai Chi Kok Reception Centre and the conversion of visit rooms in Tai Lam Correctional Institution were completed at the end of 2016 and in the first quarter of 2017 respectively; the intercom system of visit rooms in Lai King Correctional Institution were upgraded in the first quarter of 2019; the newly constructed Central Visit Room Complex in Hei Ling Chau will come into operation in the second quarter of 2019; and the construction of new visiting facilities in Pik Uk Prison is expected to be completed by mid-2021.

Persons in custody (PICs) may 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 considers 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. PICs may also maintain communication with their relatives and friends by letters, or apply to correctional officers for communicating with their relatives and friends by phone when necessary.

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