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**Legislative Council Panel on Security**

**Background paper prepared by Legislative Council Secretariat**

**Prison development plan**

**Purpose**

This paper gives a summary of past discussions held by the Panel on Security on the Administration's long-term prison development plan.

**Administration's proposal**

2. At its meetings on 7 December 2000 and 7 June 2001, the Panel was briefed on the Administration's long-term prison development plan to address the current problems of archaic facilities and inadequate penal places, and to meet the forecast growth in penal population.

3. The Administration had informed members that the Correctional Services Department (CSD) was running a total of 11 000 penal places. In order to alleviate the current overcrowding problem and meet the forecast growth in penal population, the Administration estimated that some 3 800 additional penal places would need to be provided by 2024. If the traditional institution-by-institution approach was followed, five new prisons would be required, attracting a building cost of about \$5 billion and recurrent manning by some 1 600 additional CSD staff. At the same time, on-going development projects would have to be pursued to upgrade the archaic and outdated facilities in the 24 existing institutions to ensure safe custody of prisoners and to meet their rehabilitation needs.

4. As an alternative to the traditional approach, the Administration proposed a long-term prison development plan with a view to co-locating all penal institutions at one place. The plan could replace the 24 existing institutions, obviate the need for the five prison projects originally envisaged, and equally provide a total of 15 000 places to meet the existing demand and forecast growth in penal population until 2024. It would comprise a number of stand-alone penal institutions co-located in a large prison complex.

5. The possible sites for building a large prison complex were Kung Nga Po and Hei Ling Chau. The Administration estimated that the construction costs ranged between \$27.5 billion and \$28.1 billion depending on the site selected. The CSD would be able to run the 15 000 new penal places within its existing staff establishment.

### **Views expressed by members**

6. Members were generally concerned about the security of a large prison complex, and most members had expressed reservations about the proposal of constructing a large prison complex for accommodating a penal population of 15 000. Members were of the view that a large prison complex might create difficulties in managing the complex. In the event of a riot, the situation might quickly become uncontrollable, thus resulting in a disaster. Moreover, the maintenance cost for such a complex would be very high.

7. Some members were concerned that a large prison complex might have an adverse psychological impact on inmates, especially young offenders and those convicted of minor offences. Some members had also expressed doubt about the accuracy of the Administration's projection that some 3 800 additional penal places would need to be provided by 2024. Noting that some 25% of inmates were Mainland residents, they considered that there might be a substantial drop in the number of Mainland inmates when an agreement on the transfer of sentenced persons was reached with the Mainland.

8. A member had pointed out that according to the experience in the United States, more violent incidents were found in a large prison complex. The percentage of inmates who served sentence again within two years in the large prison complex was as high as 70%.

9. Most members considered that four to five medium-sized penal complexes would provide flexibility in that construction could be adjusted or even stopped in accordance with changes in the demand for penal places.

10. The Panel requested the Administration to consider the views of members in its long-term plan for prison development.

### **Relevant papers**

11. For details of the discussions, members may wish to refer to the following documents -

- (a) Administration's paper for the Panel meeting on 7 December 2000 (LC Paper No. CB(2)388/00-01(03)) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)388/00-01 on 30 November 2000;
- (b) minutes of the meeting on 7 December 2000 (LC Paper No. CB(2)682/00-01) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)683/00-01 on 16 January 2001;
- (c) Administration's paper for the Panel meeting on 7 June 2001 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1689/00-01(04)) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1689/00-01 on 31 May 2001; and
- (d) minutes of the meeting on 7 June 2001 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2178/00-01) issued vide LC Paper No. CB(2)2179/00-01 on 7 August 2001.

12. The above papers are also available on the web site of the Legislative Council (<http://www.legco.gov.hk>).

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