

For Information

Legislative Council Panel on Security

PROVISION OF MEALS TO PRISONERS

This paper is provided in response to Members' request for information on the provision of meals to prisoners of different races/nationalities in penal institutions.

Dietary Scales

2. In accordance with Section 24A of the Prisons Ordinance (Cap 234)¹, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) provides plain and wholesome food to all prisoners. CSD currently provides the following four main dietary scales, catering to the health, dietary and religious needs of different prisoners -

Dietary Scale	Food Content	Main Application
1 (Asian Diet)	Rice, Meat/Fish, Vegetables	for those whose staple food is rice
2 (Curry Diet)	Chapatti, Dhall, Meat/Fish, Vegetables	for Muslims/Hindus with curry-based staple food
3 (Western Diet)	Potatoes, Bread, Meat/Fish, Vegetables	for those whose staple food is potatoes and bread
4 (Vegetarian Diet)	Rice, Beans, Eggs, Vegetables	for vegetarians

3. In addition, there are 11 subsidiary scales (which are minor variations to the above four main scales) to cater for prisoners' special needs. For example, some prisoners, for health or religious reasons, may require non-pork or non-beef diets. And those prisoners engaged in intensive exercises or outside work may need more calories and are thus given more rice in their diets. Moreover, food supplements and extras may be provided to individual prisoners for health reasons on the recommendation of Medical Officers.

¹ Section 24A of Cap 234: "The Chief Executive may determine dietary scales of plain and wholesome food which shall be supplied to each prisoner."

Nutritional Value and Cost

4. Designed by a qualified dietician in consultation with the Department of Health and with reference to prevailing international health guidelines, all dietary scales have regard to the statutory requirement for “plain and wholesome food” and meet the essential nutritional needs of the prisoners in the respective categories. The unit costs (i.e. the meal cost per prisoner per day) of the different dietary scales are essentially the same. Currently, the unit cost for all dietary scales (excluding rice) is \$12.20. The provision of rice is on a separate contract. Depending on the amount of rice in different dietary scales, there may be a difference in unit costs of no more than \$2.11.

Assignment of Diets to Prisoners

5. On admission, prisoners are assigned their dietary scales on the basis of their dietary requirements as well as health and religious considerations. Currently, over 90% of the prisoners are on Diet Scale 1 (Asian Diet). Prisoners can apply for a change of diets, and the applications will be considered on a case by case basis. Justifications for diet change include medical advice, physical and health conditions, religious belief, and special dietary requirements. In 2004, 1794 out of a total of 1891 applications for diet change were approved.

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