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Panel on Housing

Meeting on 6 December 2010

**Background brief on enhancement of closed-circuit television security systems
in existing public rental housing estates**

Purpose

This paper sets out the background to enhancement of closed-circuit television (CCTV) security systems in existing public rental housing (PRH) estates, and gives a brief account of the views and concerns expressed by the Panel on Housing (the Panel).

Background

2. The Housing Department (HD) began to install comprehensive security systems in all PRH estates in 1998 on security needs. Since then, metal gates and combination locks are provided at main and side entrances as well as staircase exits while intercoms and CCTVs are installed at main entrances and lifts respectively. Images from CCTVs would be transmitted to and displayed on 15" monitors, and recorded on analogue video tapes at ground floor lift lobby service counters with security guards on duty. However, the conventional video-recording systems could no longer satisfy the need in security management as these were normally monochrome and the video tapes had to be operated, changed and stored manually.

Enhancing the security systems

3. To provide more effective security management, HD decided in 2007 to upgrade the security systems by migrating from conventional monochrome CCTV systems to digital colour CCTV systems, and increasing the number of coloured

video cameras to cover a wider surveillance area. The entire project would be implemented in six years at an estimated cost of about \$92 million.

Digital technology to replace the conventional monochrome CCTV systems

4. Digitalization of the security monitoring systems provides clearer pictures and more stable images. The quicker transmission of video signals and higher resolution of coloured images provides steadier recording and playing-back facilitates the effective identification of targets or suspects. The images recorded are also smoother as the digital recording can capture six images per second. Digital recording is also capable of storing image data for 14 days with quick-search function by date and time of any incident for playback. Video-recorded signals can be duplicated to external hard disks to assist police investigations if necessary.

Increasing the number of coloured video cameras in PRH estates

5. Apart from installing coloured video cameras at main entrances at the lobby, side entrances and lifts of PRH blocks, HD will also install additional coloured video cameras at blind spots, dark corners of rear staircases and letter box areas, etc. Hence, a wider surveillance area can be covered for better protection of tenants and properties as well as for crime prevention. Tenants can also view the images of the main entrances and inside the lifts through their televisions at home. About 20 cameras are installed in each block in general, as compared to 12 in the past. Housing Managers and Estate Management Advisory Committees can recommend the locations for installing video cameras taking into account individual circumstances.

Privacy protection

6. To comply with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486), the CCTV security systems are accessible to only authorized management personnel who are responsible for operating the systems, including duplicating, erasing, processing and custody of the video footage.

Progress

7. As at October 2009, enhancement of CCTV systems have been completed for 206 housing blocks in 43 PRH estates. Moreover, all new PRH estates completed after January 2009 have been installed with the digital CCTV security system.

Deliberations by the Panel

8. The enhancement of CCTV security systems in PRH estates was discussed at the Panel meeting on 2 November 2009.

9. While welcoming the enhancement of CCTV security systems in existing PRH estates, members raised a number of questions on the operation of the systems. These included the display of images for identification purpose and the capability of security guards, particularly those older ones, to monitor the images from different locations at one time. Some members enquired if the enhancement programme could be applied to Tenants Purchase Scheme estates, and whether the CCTV security systems could be used to guard against throwing objects from height and stealing bicycle parts from bicycle stands.

Latest development

10. The Administration will brief members on the progress of enhancement of the CCTV security systems in existing PRH estates at the Panel meeting on 6 December 2010.

Relevant papers

Information paper provided by the Administration for the Housing Panel meeting on 2 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/papers/hg1102cb1-193-5-e.pdf>

Minutes of the Housing Panel meeting on 2 November 2009

<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/english/panels/hg/minutes/hg20091102.pdf>

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