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Panel on Security

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 5 January 2016**

**Installation of electric locks security system
at the correctional institutions**

Purpose

This paper provides background information and summarises past discussions by the Panel on Security ("the Panel") and the Finance Committee on the installation of electric locks security system ("ELSS") at the correctional institutions.

Background

2. Currently, the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") administers 29 correctional facilities, including 24 correctional institutions, three halfway houses and two custodial wards in public hospitals, which altogether accommodate about 8 800 persons. Among the 24 correctional institutions, Stanley Prison, established in 1937, is the largest maximum-security prison which houses persons serving life or long-term sentences.

3. According to the Administration, the gates currently used in many penal institutions and facilities are still installed with manually operated mechanical locks. Upon completion of a study conducted by CSD on problems associated with the locking/unlocking process of the old system of manually operated mechanical locks in 2012, CSD decided to replace the existing locks with ELSS in various correctional institutions by phases in accordance with their respective security and actual operational need.

Members' deliberations

4. The Panel was consulted on the Administration's proposed installation of ELSS at the Tai Lam Centre for Women ("TLCW") at its meeting on 7 February 2014. The funding proposal for the creation of a new commitment of \$25 million for the installation was approved by FC at the meeting on 12 July 2014. The deliberations and concerns of Members relating to the installation of ELSS are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Operation of ELSS

5. Members expressed concern about the contingency measures in cases of malfunction or power supply problem of ELSS and any accidents that might cause system failure. The Administration advised that ELSS was a highly reliable system with a back-up server and uninterrupted power supply to ensure its continuous operation. In the event of serious power failure or other emergency situations, ELSS could be manually operated with keys in the same way as the existing mechanical locks system.

6. The Administration further advised that the system of manually operated mechanical locks involved complicated and extensive procedures of keeping, collection, return and distribution of keys. Moreover, the manual locking or unlocking processes were relatively time-consuming and could not fully meet the security and actual operational need of the institutions in modern days.

7. Noting that ELSS was operating in conjunction with the closed-circuit television ("CCTV") cameras, intercom and call button, some members asked about the need for a CCTV system. The Administration advised that the operation of the manual lock system in TLCW did not require any CCTV system as the locks were opened by CSD staff manually. On the other hand, ELSS was an electro-mechanical locking system and required a system of CCTV cameras and intercom so that the staff in the control room could verify the identity of the requesting staff before unlocking the relevant gates. All gates would be automatically locked after being opened for a certain time interval.

8. There was also a concern as to whether any saving in CSD manpower could be achieved as a result of the installation of ELSS at TLCW. The Administration explained that as the operation of mechanical locks at penal institutions constituted only a small part of the duties of CSD staff, who were also engaged in other tasks such as patrolling and search of persons in custody, the installation of ELSS would not result in any particular change in the manpower need at TLCW.

Future installation plan

9. Some members asked about the number of existing penal institutions and facilities installed with ELSS and the Administration's plan of installing this system in other penal institutions and facilities. The Administration advised that as at July 2014, ELSS had been installed in parts in 14 penal facilities operated under CSD and there was a full-scale installation in the Lo Wu Correctional Institution. The replacement of existing manual locks in penal institutions and facilities by ELSS would be subject to operational needs and practicality. CSD would make use of the opportunity to do so on a case-by-case basis when carrying out improvement works in the relevant penal facilities.

Relevant papers

10. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
30 December 2015

Appendix

Relevant papers on the installation of electric locks security system at Tai Lam Centre for Women

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Security	7.2.2014 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
Finance Committee	12.7.2014 (Item No. 8)	Agenda Minutes

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