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**Panel on Security**

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 8 January 2019**

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

**Purpose**

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

**Background**

2. Currently, the Correctional Services Department ("CSD") administers 28 correctional facilities, including 23 correctional institutions, three halfway houses and two custodial wards in public hospitals, which altogether accommodate about 8 400 persons. Among the 23 correctional institutions, Pik Uk Correctional Institution, established in 1975, is a maximum-security institution which houses male young remands and male young prisoners.

3. According to the Administration, the gates currently used in many correctional institutions and facilities are still installed with manually operated mechanical locks. Upon completion of a study conducted by CSD in 2012 on problems associated with the locking/unlocking process of the old system of manually operated mechanical locks, 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") and Stanley Prison at its meetings on 7 February 2014 and 5 January 2016 respectively. The funding proposals for the creation of new commitments of \$25 million and \$765.4 million for the installation of ELSS at TLCW and Stanley Prison were approved by FC at the meetings on 12 July 2014 and 6 May 2016 respectively. The deliberations and concerns of Members relating to the installation of ELSS are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### Operation of electric locks security system

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 correctional institutions in modern days.

7. Noting that ELSS was operating in conjunction with the closed-circuit television ("CCTV") cameras, intercoms and call buttons, some members enquired 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. ELSS was, on the other hand, an electro-mechanical locking system operated by CSD staff in the control room. Specifically, upon the pressing of a call button by CSD staff to request for the unlocking of a gate operated under ELSS, visual and audio signals would be transmitted to the control room immediately. Having acknowledged receipt of such a request, the staff in the control room would unlock the relevant gate by remote control after verifying the identity of the requesting staff through the intercom and CCTV system. All gates would be automatically locked after being opened for a certain time interval.

8. Concern was also raised as to whether saving in CSD manpower could be achieved as a result of the installation of ELSS at TLCW or Stanley Prison. The Administration explained that the operation of mechanical locks at correctional 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. After the replacement of locks, manpower would still be needed for operation of the electric locks and performing monitoring work in the control room. The installation of ELSS would not result in any particular change in the manpower need at correctional institutions.

#### Future installation plan

9. Noting that the proposed ELSS at Stanley Prison was to be commissioned some eight years later after obtaining the funding approval, some members expressed concern about a possible increase in cost and proposed system becoming outdated. According to the Administration, the Stanley Prison was built in 1937 and there were many structural problems to be addressed in the installation process. The works concerned would involve, among other things, the installation of about 2 300 gates with electric locks and some 5 000 CCTV cameras, which had to be implemented by stages.

10. Some members enquired about the Administration's plan of installing ELSS in other correctional institutions and facilities. The Administration advised that the replacement of existing manual locks in correctional 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 correctional facilities.

11. The Administration will brief the Panel on its proposal to install ELSS in Pik Uk Correctional Institution at the meeting on 8 January 2019.

#### **Relevant papers**

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

## Appendix

### Relevant papers on the installation of electric locks security system at correctional institutions

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Security	7.2.2014 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	12.7.2014 (Item No. 8)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Security	5.1.2016 (Item VII)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	6.5.2016 (Item No. 2)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>

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