

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)086

(Question Serial No. 3179)

Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (HUI Siu-wai)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding unauthorised building works in existing buildings, the numbers of “unauthorised structures removed and irregularities rectified” and “mandatory building and window inspection” cases increase substantially in 2014 and 2015 due to the redeployment of resources for clearing the backlog of outstanding removal orders. Please inform this Committee:

- (1) of the number of new recruitment posts in the Buildings Department in 2014 following the redeployment of resources, the post to follow-up case ratio and the related expenditure;
- (2) as the Department stated that the substantial increase in the actual and estimated numbers of prosecutions in 2014 and 2015 was due to the stepping-up of enforcement, of the full definition and details of stepping up enforcement; of the reasons for not stepping up enforcement in or before 2013 despite being a law enforcement department;
- (3) as slow progress and low success rate of investigation of water seepage cases in buildings have been reported, of the numbers of cases satisfactorily concluded and cases with investigation underway in the past five years.

Asked by: Hon TIEN Puk-sun, Michael (Member Question No. 63)

Reply:

- (1) The number of unauthorised structures removed and irregularities rectified increased from 14 972 in 2013 to 22 866 in 2014 as the Buildings Department (BD) deployed more resources for clearing the backlog of outstanding removal orders. The relevant tasks are carried out by the 620 professional and technical staff, 44 of whom were added in 2014-15, in the two Existing Buildings Divisions, the Mandatory Building Inspection Division and the Minor Works and Signboard Control Section of the BD as part of their overall duties to implement the building safety and maintenance enforcement programmes of the BD. We are not able to provide a breakdown of the

manpower resources and expenditure involved solely for handling the cases.

- (2) The BD has all along been taking enforcement action against unauthorised building works (UBWs). Since 2014, the BD has reviewed its job priorities and deployed more resources to clear the backlog of outstanding removal orders, including instigating prosecutions against non-compliant building owners, so as to enhance the effectiveness of enforcement work. The number of prosecutions against failure to comply with removal orders was 2 532 in 2014 and is expected to increase to 3 000 in 2015.
- (3) The BD has set up a Joint Office (JO) with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department to handle public reports on water seepage in private buildings. The numbers of reports received, reports handled and results of investigation in the past five years are tabulated below –

Number of Cases	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Reports received	25 717	23 660	27 353	28 504	27 896
Reports handled ⁽¹⁾	22 971	23 210	24 553	24 856	22 056
• Cases screened out ⁽²⁾	11 051	12 219	13 727	13 062	10 961
• Cases with investigations concluded	11 920	10 991	10 826	11 794	11 095
– Seepage ceased during investigation	4 861	4 703	4 810	4 766	4 146
– Source of water seepage identified	4 737	4 199	4 053	4 692	4 816
– Source of water seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated	2 322	2 089	1 963	2 336	2 133

Note ⁽¹⁾: The figures do not necessarily correspond to the number of reports received in the same year.

Note ⁽²⁾: There are cases such as unjustified cases and withdrawal cases, in which no investigation will be taken by the JO.

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