

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)087

(Question Serial No. 1859)

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:

The authorities stated that, in 2015, they have continued the large scale operation on inspection of sub-divided flats (SDFs) in 210 target buildings, comprising 190 domestic/composite buildings and 20 industrial buildings (IBs), and rectification of irregularities of building works associated with the SDFs. However, property prices stay high, low-priced old buildings were redeveloped and new buildings completed are pricey. The general public finds them unaffordable and is forced to live in SDFs or even SDFs used for domestic purposes in IBs. In connection with this phenomenon, will the authorities inform this Committee:

- (1) of the details of the work of the Buildings Department in handling SDFs, the reasons for demanding the eradication of SDFs while the general public is unable to afford the high rents, and how the Government is going to solve the housing problem of the grassroots;
- (2) of the number of SDFs known to the Department to date, broken down by district;
- (3) of the districts and number of SDFs involved in the Department's work of handling SDFs in the past year, as well as the manpower and expenditure involved;
- (4) of the districts and number of SDFs involved in the Department's work of handling SDFs in the coming year, as well as the estimated manpower and expenditure involved;
- (5) whether the Government will provide any transitional accommodation for the residents rendered homeless, and of the addresses, number of flats and population that can be accommodated?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Chi-chuen (Member Question No. 12)

Reply:

- (1) The Government's policy is not to eradicate all sub-divided flats (SDFs) but to ensure their safety.

To this end, as regards SDFs in domestic and composite buildings, the Buildings Department (BD) has since April 2011 launched large scale operations aiming at rectifying irregularities of building works associated with SDFs. Where actionable irregularities are identified, including those involving the blocking of means of escape, the BD will issue removal orders to the owners, and consider instigating prosecution against those who fail to comply with the removal orders.

As regards SDFs located in industrial buildings (IBs), they are not designed for domestic use and are subject to different requirements in areas such as provision of natural lighting and ventilation, means of escape and other fire safety measures. Notably, occupants of units in an IB converted for domestic use are exposed to high fire risks which, among other factors, often arise because other units within the same IB are still being used for industrial activities or storage of dangerous and inflammable goods. More stringent enforcement action is thus taken by the BD to eradicate SDFs for domestic use in IBs. Once such SDFs are identified, the BD will issue removal orders and discontinuation orders against the owners. In case of non-compliance with the orders, the BD will institute prosecution against the owner concerned, as well as consider applying to the court for a closure order to close down the premises and arrange for government contractors to carry out the necessary rectification works.

- (2) The BD does not compile statistics on the total number of SDFs in the territory.
- (3) In 2015, the total number of SDFs inspected by the BD was 3 466 and its geographical distribution is tabulated as follows -

District	No. of SDFs inspected
Central and Western	138
Wan Chai	193
Eastern	195
Southern	7
Wong Tai Sin	110
Kwun Tong	407
Yau Tsim Mong	633
Sham Shui Po	641
Kowloon City	456
North	14
Sha Tin	56
Tai Po	78
Tsuen Wan	218
Tuen Mun	130
Yuen Long	144
Kwai Tsing	46
Total	3 466

In 2015-16, enforcement action against irregularities associated with SDFs is carried out by the 376 professional and technical staff of the two Existing Buildings Divisions of the BD as part of their overall duties to implement the BD's building safety and maintenance enforcement programmes. We are not able to provide a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved solely for carrying out enforcement action in relation to SDFs.

- (4) In 2016, the estimated number of SDFs to be inspected is 3 800. We are not able to predict the geographical distribution of these SDFs.

In 2016-17, enforcement actions against irregularities associated with SDFs will be carried out by the 412 professional and technical staff of the two Existing Buildings Divisions of the BD as part of their overall duties to implement the BD's building safety and maintenance enforcement programmes. We are not able to provide a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure involved solely for carrying out enforcement action in relation to SDFs.

- (5) It has always been the Government's policy that no one will be rendered homeless as a result of its enforcement action. Should any occupant be verified by the relevant departments as having been rendered homeless as a result of the Government's actions, referrals will be made for them to stay temporarily in the Po Tin Transit Centre in Tuen Mun provided by the Housing Department while they are awaiting eligibility vetting for further rehousing or looking for alternative accommodation themselves. The Po Tin Transit Centre can accommodate 340 temporary residents.

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