

Buildings Department follows up on fallen rendering at Po On Building

Upon notification by the Police this morning (July 5) that some rendering from the external wall of Po On Building on 30-36 Mong Kok Road had fallen, the Buildings Department (BD) officers were immediately deployed to carry out a site inspection and found that some rendering had fallen off from the external wall of a unit on the 16th floor of the building. The BD then arranged to erect temporary protective measures and removed the loose rendering to ensure public safety.

The BD confirmed that the fallen rendering from the external wall involved the same unit as the one with an incident that occurred on July 2 (Sunday). The BD did not rule out the possibility that small cracks were formed at the rendering on the external wall when the canopy fell on July 2, which were further affected by heavy rains and high temperatures, thus causing the rendering to fall. The BD will continue to investigate the cause of the incident.

The BD has arranged the government contractor to erect scaffolding and protective screen on the external wall of the 16th floor of the building and to remove loose rendering. The registered inspector and the contractor of the owners' corporation (OC) of the building also attended site to follow up the incident. As directed by the BD, they erected a catchfan on the lower floor of the building facing Mong Kok Road to further safeguard public safety.

The BD has issued earlier a statutory notice under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) to the OC in respect of the common parts of the building. Although the concerned building has been inspected, the statutory notice under the MBIS will not be considered as complied with until the repair works have been completed. The BD will continue to follow up the matter seriously, and has requested the OC to submit a programme of works to comply with the statutory notice by carrying out the repair works as soon as possible. If the OC fails to commence the repair works within a reasonable period of time, the BD will arrange the government contractor to carry out the relevant repair works on behalf of the owners and will recover the costs from them afterwards.

With regard to the recent incidents of fallen rendering from external walls, the BD will review the list of buildings in the territory that have not complied with the statutory notices under the MBIS in respect of the common parts. The BD will deploy manpower to strengthen enforcement action, including issuing warning letters to the owners concerned, urging owners of buildings with higher risks to expedite building inspection and repair works, arranging government contractors to carry out repair works and recovering the relevant costs from the owners afterwards. Prosecution actions will also be instigated if necessary. The BD will review the overall situation, including the number of buildings that have not complied with the statutory notices and draw up an action plan. The BD will report the matter to the Development

Bureau and explain it to the public.

The BD emphasised that it is the responsibility of owners to ensure their buildings are free of unauthorised building works (UBWs) and no UBWs are carried out. Timely repair and maintenance of private buildings is the basic responsibility of owners. Pursuant to section 40(1BC) of the Buildings Ordinance, any person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with a statutory notice served on him or her, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine at level 5 (\$50,000 at present) and to imprisonment for one year, as well as a further fine of \$5,000 for each day that the offence has continued.

Besides, the Urban Renewal Authority has been implementing the "Operation Building Bright 2.0", which provides financial assistance and technical support to building owners who have received statutory notices under the MBIS. The latest round of the scheme is now open for applications. Interested owners can visit the scheme website (www.brplatform.org.hk/tc/subsidy-and-assistance/operation-building-bright-2-0) or call the Building Maintenance Assistance Schemes Hotline at 3188 1188 for details.