

Buildings Department highly concerned about fire incident in New Lucky House in Jordan

The Buildings Department (BD) is highly concerned about the fire incident in New Lucky House in Jordan on April 10. The BD deployed its officers to the scene in the morning and, with the assistance of the officers of the Fire Services Department (FSD), entered the common areas and some private units of the building at around 2pm to conduct an inspection. The BD officers found that some structures were damaged by the fire, but there was no obvious danger to the overall structure of the building. The BD will fully co-operate with the FSD in its investigation. If the fire is found to be related to a breach of the Buildings Ordinance, the BD will, based on the investigation result, take enforcement action against the persons involved, including instigating criminal prosecution.

The subject building is 60 years old. The BD issued a statutory notice under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme to the owners' corporation (OC) in respect of the common parts of the building in 2018. The OC appointed a registered inspector (RI) in October 2019 and notified the BD again in April 2023 that it had appointed another RI. This RI submitted a prescribed inspection report to the BD in May 2023 and recommended that prescribed repair works would be required, including the replacement of fire doors, provision of protected lobbies for escape staircase and improvement works required under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572). The building in question was under the previous action strategy one of the some 1 800 buildings for which RIs had been appointed, and the RI concerned had informed the BD of the real progress. The RI concerned is now preparing tender documents for the repair works and will discuss with the OC on the tendering for a contractor. The BD will continue to follow up with the OC and urge for their commencement of repair works as soon as possible. The BD will also consider taking enforcement action if necessary.

In addition, the BD issued a Fire Safety Direction to the OC in 2008, requiring the upgrading of certain fire safety provisions of the building to a level in line with the current fire safety standards, including the replacement of fire doors, provision of fire resisting enclosures to non-emergency services and provision of fixed lights meeting the required fire resistance and the like. The OC had appointed a consultant to follow up on the Direction in 2015 and 2020 respectively. The BD also followed up with the progress and issued an advisory letter urging for compliance but the Direction is still not complied with. Noting from the above-mentioned prescribed inspection report submitted by the RI concerned, that the repair proposal will also cover the improvement works required by the Direction, the BD will continue to follow up with the OC and its consultant with a view to closely monitoring the progress of the required fire safety improvement works.

Regarding the unauthorised building works (UBWs), the BD received a total of seven reports concerning subdivided flats in the building in the past three years. Five of the cases did not have actionable UBWs under the prevailing policy against UBWs, while actionable UBWs were found in the other two cases (1/F and 2/F premises not involved). The BD issued removal orders to the relevant owners on March 19, 2024, requiring them to reinstate the fire resisting door at the main entrance of the premises and the fire compartment wall of the premises respectively. If the removal orders are not complied with before the deadline, the BD will take appropriate follow-up actions, including considering initiating prosecution against the owners concerned.

The BD urged members of the public to take building maintenance matter seriously and comply with all statutory orders so as to ensure building safety.