

Buildings Department's response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the quality of steel reinforcing bars (rebar) used in the redevelopment project of Mariners' Club in Tsim Sha Tsui, a spokesman for the Buildings Department (BD) gave the following response today (January 20):

The Government attaches great importance to the safety and quality of building works. In so far as private development projects are concerned, the BD, by virtue of the Buildings Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 123), requires the registered building professionals (including the registered structural engineers (RSE)) and the registered contractors (RC) responsible for the building works to properly supervise the works, including the quality of the reinforced concrete works, so as to ensure that the works are carried out in accordance with the BO and its subsidiary regulations, approved plans of the works concerned and any orders made or conditions imposed by the BD under the aforementioned legislation, including compliance with the required standards.

According to the established mechanism, the BD will, when approving structural plans, impose conditions under the BO to require the sampling and testing of rebar to comply with the construction standards before use. The test shall be performed by a laboratory accredited under the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme. When submitting the test reports, the project RSE should append a signed statement to confirm that the aforesaid conditions have been complied with and all rebar used for the construction and the test specimens covered by the test reports are in accordance with the requirements of the BO and allied regulations.

The BD received reports from members of the public about the quality of the rebar used in the Mariners' Club redevelopment project at 11 Middle Road between September and November 2023. The project RSE was then contacted and requested to submit the test reports of the rebar used in the redevelopment project, so as to ensure the compliance with the approved plans, as well as the requirements of the BO and allied regulations. The test reports for a total of 17 batches of rebar submitted by the project RSE have demonstrated compliance with the approved plans and with the requirements of the BO and allied regulations and no irregularity on the quality of rebar was found. Nonetheless, the test reports for one batch of rebar (involving 29/F to 39/F of the project) revealed that the batch was originally intended to be used in another development project at No. 105-113 Ta Chuen Ping Street, Kwai Chung. The RSE also explained that the rebar in question had been sampled and tested in accordance with the construction standards upon arrival at the Kwai Chung development site, but some of it was later delivered to the Middle Road site for use.

As the test reports themselves were not sufficient to prove that that particular batch of rebar which had passed the test was indeed the same batch that was delivered for use at the Middle Road site, the BD then requested the

RSE for an explanation. In this regard, the RSE proposed in mid-January this year to randomly open up part of the cast structures, in which that batch of rebar had been used, and to take rebar samples for testing to verify compliance with the approved plans and relevant statutory standards. The BD is now scrutinising the proposal so as to ensure that the rebar in question complies with the approved plans, the B0 and allied regulations, thereby ensuring building safety and removing any doubts.

The BD has always attached great importance to the quality of building works. The BD will conduct an investigation into the incident. If it is found that a person/RC has breached the provisions of the B0, the BD will take follow-up actions seriously, including instigating prosecution and/or disciplinary action against the person/RC.