

CSD issues statement in response to media enquiries about rehabilitated person

In response to recent media enquiries about a rehabilitated person concerning a work assignment, communication, complaints mechanism and the handling of illicit activities inside a penal institution, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) issued the following statement today (October 18) :

According to the law, no work will be carried out by persons in custody (PICs), beyond what is strictly necessary, on Sundays and important festivals. Under the existing practice, meals provided by institutions are prepared by PICs assigned to work in the kitchen under the supervision of correctional staff and catering instructors. Kitchens of institutions have to be operated all year round in order to provide meals for PICs every day. PICs who work in the kitchen will have their weekly rest day by rotation.

Regarding communications, PICs may send and receive letters according to the provisions stipulated in law, including to/from members of the Legislative Council, the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, other law enforcement agencies, etc, and proper records will be maintained to this effect. PICs may also request to have an interview with legislators or other law enforcement agencies through social visits, legal visits or visiting Justices of the Peace (JPs). There are quite a lot of examples in the past where interviews were conducted with PICs after the relevant parties were notified of the request of PICs.

For complaints raised by PICs which are of a minor nature and related to daily operational matters of institutions, the Complaints Investigation Unit (CIU) of the CSD will refer them to the institutional management concerned for enquiry according to the existing mechanism, in order that the matter could be handled immediately. The institutional management will explain the circumstances to the PIC in detail and inform him/her of the result of the follow-up action taken. The CIU will inform the complainant regarding the relevant arrangement in writing and administer close monitoring on the progress of the case. If the case cannot be resolved by the institutional management or the complainant is not satisfied with the arrangement or the findings of the case, the CIU will carry out an investigation accordingly.

The CIU will conduct an investigation into each complaint in a fair, impartial and thorough manner. Upon conclusion of the investigation of the complaint, the CIU will submit the findings to the Correctional Services Department Complaints Committee for examination and endorsement. If the complainant is not satisfied with the findings of the investigation, he/she can lodge an appeal to the Correctional Services Department Complaints Appeal Board (CSDCAB). At present, the CSDCAB comprises 18 JPs and religious persons who are familiar with correctional operations, so as to ensure that the appeal cases are handled in an impartial manner.

In order to facilitate the rehabilitation of PICs in a safe and orderly custodial environment, the CSD will not tolerate any form of illicit activities such as gambling, unauthorised handling of dietary ingredients, etc. Practical measures, including large scale search operations, are taken to curb all kinds of illicit activities.

The CSD attaches great importance to the conduct, integrity and discipline of its staff. Guidelines in relation to personal conduct, ethics and discipline are promulgated from time to time for staff observance. Any staff members found to have breached the law will be dealt with seriously by the CSD.

The CSD suggests PICs or discharged persons who feel aggrieved by any treatment they received during imprisonment should lodge a complaint or air their grievances through various channels such as the CIU, the Ombudsman or other law enforcement agencies.