

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)151**

**(Question Serial No. 3189)**

Head: (91) Lands Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified  
Programme: (1) Land Administration  
Controlling Officer: Director of Lands (Ms Bernadette LINN)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

At end-January 2017, Planning Department (PlanD) has reviewed the long-term uses of 173 vacant school premises (VSPs) and recommended the long-term uses of 28 school sites for residential use, including public, private and village type development. In this connection, what is Lands Department (Lands D)'s executive plan and timetable to implement PlanD's recommendations on the long-term uses of the 28 school sites? What is the latest progress of the follow-up work with Education Bureau (EDB) concerning the VSPs as identified by Director of Audit's Report No.65 and Public Accounts Committee's Report No.65? (Please provide details of meetings/correspondences between EDB and Lands D concerning the issue since the VSP problem exposed, with understanding/decisions reached in these meetings/correspondences).

Asked by: Hon SHEK Lai-him, Abraham (Member Question No. 10)

Reply:

It has all along been the Government's policy objective to put vacant school premises (VSP) into gainful use. For VSP no longer required by the Education Bureau (EDB) for school uses, EDB will inform the Planning Department (PlanD) and other relevant departments (such as Lands Department (Lands D) and Housing Department(HD)) in accordance with the central clearing house mechanism. PlanD will consider suitable alternative long-term uses (such as government, institution or community, residential and other uses) for the concerned VSP sites. Upon confirmation of the long-term uses of the concerned VSP sites through the central clearing house mechanism, PlanD will inform relevant departments, such as Lands D and HD, of the recommendations for their follow up as appropriate.

For VSP on sites returned to or recovered by Lands D and where their long-term uses have been identified and agreed within the Government, Lands D will arrange to dispose of the sites together with the VSP thereon for such long-term uses. Where implementation of the identified long-term uses will take time or where long-term uses are yet to be determined, Lands D will try to put the sites together with the VSP thereon to temporary uses, such as allocating them for use by government bureaux/departments, renting them out on short-term tenancies upon identification of suitable temporary uses, or including the VSP into the list of vacant government sites of the relevant districts for application by interested parties for greening and community uses on a short-term basis.

Against the above background, the involvement/progress of Lands D in respect of the 28 VSP sites recommended for residential use, including public, private and village type development, is as follows :-

- (a) Six VSP sites are wholly or partly private lots. For five of these, Lands D does not have the authority to recover the relevant private land according to the relevant land leases simply because of cessation of school operation. Since these five VSP sites are privately owned, implementation of their long-term uses will depend on private initiatives. For the remaining one, Lands D is taking action to recover the concerned land according to the relevant land lease.
- (b) Two VSP sites were sold for residential use under the Government's land sale programme in March 2014 and April 2015 respectively; and another two VSP sites would be disposed for residential development through Government's land sale programme in due course.
- (c) One VSP site has been approved for village type development, and two VSP sites which have been recommended for village type development have been put into the list of VSP available for application on short-term basis pending the implementation programme for their long-term uses. Lands D is currently considering the applications for village type development for another five VSP sites.
- (d) One of the remaining ten VSP sites has reverted back to EDB for primary school use upon review and agreement by the concerned departments. For the rest of the nine VSP sites, Lands D will continue to provide land administration input for implementation of public housing development (of these, the development of public housing on four sites has commenced while the development for another five are under planning by the concerned department).

EDB and Lands D have reached consensus on the mechanism and procedures for handling VSP and strengthening communication and coordination with a view to putting VSP to gainful use as soon as possible. Lands D has been continuing with its efforts in taking suitable action to recover possession of VSP (including VSP on land for which there is a cessation/diminution of user clause in the land lease and VSP held on government land licences) as appropriate. In respect of the use and disposal of VSP on private land that

have not been returned by EDB to PlanD under the central clearing mechanism, EDB has discussed with Lands D on the mechanism to handle these cases with a view to strengthening mutual communication and cooperation in order to improve the handling of these cases. The progress with details of the follow-up actions taken by Lands D and EDB has been reported in past Government Minutes in response to the relevant Reports of the Public Accounts Committee. We will continue to keep the Public Accounts Committee informed of the progress as appropriate.

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