

Press December 14, 1995

Headline : *Housing Department Cracks Down On Absent Staff*

Content : The following is issued on behalf of the Housing Authority:
The Housing Department has recently completed investigation into cases of unauthorized absence from duty and fraudulent claims of overtime allowance by a number of staff, covering a period between April 1992 and September 1993. The investigation started in April 1993 following discovery of some irregularities by the management in an estate office and receipt of anonymous complaints. As a result of the investigation, 769 officers have been issued verbal and written warnings, 365 reprimanded or severely reprimanded, and 37 removed from the service by way of compulsory retirement or dismissal, depending on the gravity of their offences. Such disciplinary actions are in line with civil service procedures.

The great majority (about 76 per cent) of the offenders committed minor offences of late arrival or early departure for an aggregate period of not more than three days. One Hundred and thirty-five cases involved fraudulent claim of overtime allowance totalling a bit less than \$45,000.

Action has been taken to recover the overpayment of salaries and overtime allowance.

"Based on the findings of the investigation, a series of measures have been put in place to prevent similar recurrences in the future," a spokesman for the Department said today (Thursday).

"The Department regrets such behaviours by some of its staff. The management cannot and will not tolerate such practices. It takes a very serious view on staff discipline issues and has drawn up plans to intensify management training for supervisors to equip them with modern management skills. It is also looking into the accountability of the supervisors," he said.

"We also plan to launch service oriented training for staff at all levels to enhance their service culture.

"In addition, we are conducting a review on the Department's overtime and leave system," the spokesman said. Meanwhile the Department has introduced a series of measures to strengthen staff supervision and control of staff attendance.

These include a new time clock system, the provision of communication equipment to enable supervisors to maintain contact with staff on outdoor duties, the designation of a senior officer for overall control of staff attendance in every estate and squatter control office, surprise checks on staff attendance by senior officers outside normal office hours, and the compilation of code of conduct and work standards.

"We realize that devoted staff and effective management are fundamental to the delivery of quality service to our tenants and the community at large," the spokesman said.

"The stepped-up efforts in strengthening staff supervision demonstrate our determination to enhance the quality of our

service," he stressed.
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