

### **HK\$97,000 fine over illegal house basement**

Sai Kung home owner who ignored removal order now faces hefty rectification bill

A house owner in Sai Kung was fined HK\$97,250 – almost half the maximum penalty – for failing to remove an unauthorised basement and now faces a hefty bill to get rid of it.

The Buildings Department said the basement was built without approval and that it had ordered the owner to remove the illegal structure. As the owner had refused to take action he was charged under the Buildings Ordinance with failing to comply with the department's order before a given date.

The department said yesterday that the owner pleaded guilty to the charge on January 27 and was sentenced by a magistrate on June 16.

The maximum penalty for the charge is HK\$200,000, plus a further fine of HK\$20,000 for each day that the offence continues.

“Failure to comply with a removal order without reasonable excuse is a serious offence under the Buildings Ordinance,” the department said in a statement.

The owner was now undertaking relevant rectification work, the department said.

Former chief secretary Henry Tang Ying-yen's wife, Lisa Kuo Yu-chin, was fined HK\$110,000 in November 2013 for having an illegal structure in their house. But Kuo faced a different charge of starting construction of a reported 2,400 sq ft basement at the York Road home without planning approval.

The basement – dubbed “an underground palace” – was reported to have lavish facilities including a wine cellar, home cinema, gymnasium and Japanese bath.

Andrew Kung Sui-lun, chairman of the Building Surveying Division of **the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors**, said removing a basement was usually a complicated operation and might take more than a year.

However, in his experience he said the Buildings Department would usually give enough time for the owner to carry out such work. And if the removal work was particularly complex and

required more time, the owner could ask for an extension.