

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)301

(Question Serial No. 6580)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Please advise on the following:

- (1) the number of existing public temporary storage facilities for cremains and their utilisation rates; whether there is any plan to increase the number of such facilities; if yes, the details, the timetable and the estimated expenditure involved;
- (2) the number of cases where the applicants, upon expiry of the free storage period, continue to apply for temporary storage of cremains which have been kept for 1 to 3 years, 4 to 6 years, 7 to 9 years and 10 years or over; and
- (3) the number of cases where the applicants did not retrieve the cremains upon expiry of the storage period last year, details of the follow-up actions taken by the Government, the procedures for handling unclaimed cremains kept in the temporary storage facilities and the expenditure involved.

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 428)

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows –

- (1) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) provides service for temporary storage of cremains in all its crematoria free of charge in the first two months following cremation. The duration may be extended upon application at a monthly fee of \$80. At present, there are a total of about 23 000 temporary urn storage spaces at the Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium (Phase III & Phase V). An additional 28 000 temporary storage spaces will be made available at the old Kwai Chung Crematorium and vacant staff quarters at the Cape Collinson Crematorium and the Hong Kong Cemetery by stages from Q2 2016 to Q2 2017 at an estimated cost of about \$16 million. We are exploring the feasibility of increasing temporary storage spaces in other venues.

- (2) Information on the duration of temporary storage, as at December 2015, is given below –

Cases of cremains being temporarily stored in the Department's facilities	
Duration of storage after the two-month free storage period	Number of case
Over two months to 12 months	53
Over 12 months to 48 months	6
Over 48 months to 84 months	0
Over 84 months to 120 months	0
Over 120 months	0

- (3) As at December 2015, there were 20 overdue storage cases after expiry of the two-month free storage period. All of the overdue charges have been settled. According to the established procedures, the Department will handle overdue storage cases by issuing letters to the applicants inviting them to collect the cremains and settle the overdue payments. After the overdue payments have been settled, the cremains concerned may be collected by the applicants. If the applicants do not respond to the letters, the cremains may ultimately be delivered to the Sandy Ridge Cemetery and kept there for at least another six months before disposal at the communal grave. The expenditure involved in the handling of overdue cases is absorbed within the Department's existing resources.

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