

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)270

(Question Serial No. 4254)

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:

With regard to the burial services provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department), please advise this Committee on the following:

- (a) the number of cases of using the Department's service of scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance in each of the past 3 years;
- (b) the number of cases of using the Department's service of scattering of cremains at sea, as well as the utilisation rate of the service quota, in each of the past 3 years; whether the Department will continue to increase the service quota in 2017-18 (if yes, the details and the estimated expenditure in this respect; if not, the reason(s));
- (c) whether the Department has drawn up any plan for continuing the publicity work on scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance and at sea in 2017-18; if yes, details of the plan, including a breakdown of the estimated expenditure by publicity channel or event, as well as the timetable and estimated indicators for the events concerned; if not, the reason(s);
- (d) the number of webpages dedicated to the memory of the deceased in the "memorial.gov.hk" website managed by the Department; the number of new memorial webpages created in each of the past 3 years; the number of visitors of the website in each of the past 3 years;
- (e) the number of memorial webpages removed from the "memorial.gov.hk" website by the Department due to mischief or other reasons in each of the past 3 years; whether the Department will take follow-up actions against the creators of those improper or mischievous memorial webpages (if yes, the details; if not, the reason(s));
- (f) whether the Department will carry out publicity and promotion work for the "memorial.gov.hk" website in 2017-18; if yes, the details and timetable of the work, as well as the estimated expenditure in this respect; and

- (g) the manpower arrangement and estimated expenditure for the operation of the “memorial.gov.hk” website in 2017-18; whether the Department will consider reviewing the cost effectiveness of the website in 2017-18 and follow up the results and recommendations of the review (if yes, the work plan and timetable of the review; if not, the reason(s)).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (Member Question No. 237)

Reply:

- (a) The number of applications for scattering cremated ashes in the Gardens of Remembrance managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in the past 3 calendar years is as follows -

Year	Number of cases on scattering of ashes in Gardens of Remembrance
2014	2 697
2015	3 196
2016	4 004

- (b) Information on the number of applications received and the utilisation rate of the free ferry service provided by the Department for scattering cremated ashes at sea in the past 3 calendar years is given below –

Year	Service capacity	Number of applications received	Utilisation rate
2014	900	790	88%
2015	950	817	86%
2016	1 175	850	72%

Note: The utilisation rate is calculated by the number of applications received in that year divided by the total service capacity provided in the same year. As the total service capacity has been increased in the past few years to offer greater flexibility to the public, hence despite the increase in number of applications received, the utilisation rate has decreased.

The Department reviews the service capacity for the free ferry service from time to time, and will consider increasing the service level should demand for the service so warrant.

- (c) In 2017-18, the Department will continue with its efforts in promoting green burial, including scattering of cremated ashes in Gardens of Remembrance or at sea and the Internet Memorial Service (IMS). Plans are in hand to sustain publicity and public education through different channels, including Announcement in the Public Interest on television and radio, promotional videos, posters and banners, a mobile app, collaboration with non-governmental organisations and promotional activities at

Senior Exhibition, etc. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for promoting green burial in 2017-18 is about \$8 million.

While the total number of cases where ashes are scattered at sea or in Gardens of Remembrance has increased by 38% from 2014 to 2016, it takes time for the community at large to accept green burial as a sustainable form of handling cremated human ashes. We will continue to improve the green burial facilities and services while stepping up our promotion efforts.

- (d) As at 31 December 2016, there were 9 416 memorial webpages for the deceased created under the IMS website provided by the Department. Information on the number of newly created memorial webpages and hit count of such webpages in the past 3 calendar years is given below -

Year	Number of newly created memorial webpages	Hit count
2014	1 034	516 202
2015	1 048	440 990
2016	1 366	590 672

- (e) In the past 3 calendar years, the Department removed 1 memorial webpage in the IMS website due to its malicious use. The Department reserves its right as the website administrator to remove concerned webpage when the situation warrants.
- (f) Please refer to the answer in (c) above for the required information.
- (g) In 2017-18, the work of operating the IMS website will continue to be absorbed by the Department's existing staff. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for maintaining the service and developing a mobile app is about \$0.42 million. The Department keeps under review the cost effectiveness of the IMS and will seek improvements as appropriate to better meet the needs of the users.

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