

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)112

(Question Serial No. 1949)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

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:

In connection with the public columbaria and crematoria in Hong Kong, please advise this Committee, in the past 3 years:

1. the number of cremation sessions available, the number of sessions used and the utilisation rate of the equipment of the crematoria managed by the Department;
2. the number of deaths of local residents, with a breakdown by burial method (including scattering cremains at sea, scattering cremains in the Gardens of Remembrance, interring ashes in public niches, and interring ashes in private niches);
3. the latest number of applications for public niches and the average waiting time;
4. the number of new public niches to be provided in the next 10 years and their locations (please present the information in tabular form);
5. the number of applications for a licence under the Private Columbaria Ordinance received, and the number of cases approved (if any); and
6. the locations, capacity and utilisation rate of the temporary storage facilities for cremains provided by the Department.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hak-kan (Member Question No. (LegCo use): 39)

Reply:

1. Information on the number of cremation sessions released, cremation sessions booked and the percentage of cremation sessions booked in public crematoria managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in the past 3 calendar years is given below –

Name of Crematorium	2015			2016			2017		
	No. of cremation sessions released	No. of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	No. of cremation sessions released	No. of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	No. of cremation sessions released	No. of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked
Cape Collinson	8 288	8 283	99.9%	15 111	12 945	85.7%	14 869	14 161	95.2%
Diamond Hill	7 896	7 887	99.9%	8 578	8 519	99.3%	8 253	8 203	99.4%
Fu Shan	6 960	6 949	99.8%	5 895	5 814	98.6%	5 563	5 518	99.2%
Kwai Chung	8 448	8 443	99.9%	6 560	6 494	99.0%	6 622	6 558	99.0%
Cheung Chau	1 308	195	14.9%	1 105	119	10.8%	1 170	101	8.6%
Wo Hop Shek	10 998	10 980	99.8%	10 629	9 665	90.9%	8 611	8 268	96.0%
Total:	43 898	42 737	97.4%	47 878	43 556	91.0%	45 088	42 809	94.9%

2. The information sought is provided as follows –

Year	No. of deaths	No. of burials	No. of cremations	No. of cases of scattering of ashes		No. of public niches allocated
				At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance	
2015	46 757	3 355	42 737	877	3 196	14 967
2016	46 662	3 253	43 556	900	4 004	5 510
2017	45 883	2 962	42 809	966	4 966	543

Note: The Department does not have information on the number of cases of interring ashes in private niches.

3. In the past 3 calendar years, on average about 315 niches per annum are returned to the Department. These niches are re-allocated according to the priority in the waiting list of the respective columbarium. The information sought is provided as follows –

Year	No. of applications on the waiting list	Average waiting time (months)
2015	21 048	45
2016	24 280	42
2017	29 168	46

Note: The average waiting time is dependent on the number of niches that are returned to the Department for re-allocation.

4. Under the district-based columbarium development scheme, a total of 24 potential sites have been identified in the 18 districts for columbarium development. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2017, the Government has consulted the relevant District Councils (DCs) on the projects at 14 sites, and all DCs indicated support or no-objection to the projects. These 14 projects would provide around 589 000 new niches in total, accounting for about two thirds of the total number of new niches available in all the 24 projects.

Among the projects for which relevant DCs have been consulted, the Department has obtained funding approval for taking forward the following projects –

Location	Number of niches	Anticipated Year of Completion
Peng Chau Columbarium Extension, Islands District#	360	2018
Hong Kong Cemeteries and Crematoria Office (Part) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department at Wong Nai Chung Road, Wan Chai District	855	2018
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension, Islands District#	1 400	2019
Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun District	160 000	2019
Wo Hop Shek Cemetery (Phase 1), North District	44 000	2019
Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery Extension, Islands District	790	2020

Not under the district-based columbarium development scheme

5. At the conclusion of the application period for pre-cut-off columbaria on 29 March 2018, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) has received applications for licence from 116 private columbaria and applications for all types of specified instruments from 144 private columbaria. All of these applicants have not submitted some of the required supporting documents or information to prove their compliance with the application requirements. Hence, all these applications are under processing and have not yet reached the stage of submission to PCLB for determination.

6. The information sought is provided as follows –

Year	Kwai Chung Crematorium (Only for storage of cremains bags) (Capacity: 10 080 spaces)		Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III* (Only for storage of cinerary urns) (Capacity: 5 040 spaces)	
	No. of spaces occupied^	Usage rate	No. of spaces occupied^	Usage rate
2015	59	0.6%		
2016	95	0.9%		
2017	265	2.6%	219	4.3%

* Temporary storage service for cremains at Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III has been commissioned since 30 June 2017.

^ No. of storage spaces occupied as at 31 December in respective year.

Note: The Department at present has a total of some 28 000 temporary storage spaces at the Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phases III and V, and the vacant staff quarters at Cape Collision Crematorium and Hong Kong Cemetery. Amongst the aforesaid temporary storage facilities, Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III have been open for use. In addition, some 40 000 temporary storage spaces would be made available in the coming two years. The Department will keep the usage of temporary storage facilities under review.

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