

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)303

(Question Serial No. 5610)

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:

With regard to the burial services provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please advise this Committee of 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 2018-19 (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 2018-19; 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 2018-19; 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 2018-19; whether the Department will consider reviewing the cost effectiveness of the website in 2018-19 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. (LegCo use): 141)

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
2015	3 196
2016	4 004
2017	4 966

- (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
2015	950	817	86%
2016	1 175	850	72%
2017	1 175	906	77%

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.

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) & (f)

In 2018-19, the Department will continue to take proactive 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 enhance publicity and public education through different channels, including Announcements in the Public Interest on television and other media, promotional videos, posters and banners, booklets and leaflets and collaboration with non-governmental organisations and promotional activities at Senior Exhibition. A dedicated and user-friendly webpage on green burial and a mobile app for IMS to facilitate mobile device users to use the

service anytime and anywhere will also be launched soon. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for promoting green burial in 2018-19 is about \$15.4 million.

While the total number of green burial cases handled by the Department has increased by about 45% from 2015 to 2017, 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, engage community stakeholders for support and step up our publicity and public education efforts.

- (d) As at 31 December 2017, there were 10 909 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
2015	1 048	440 990
2016	1 366	590 672
2017	1 493	675 947

- (e) In the past 3 calendar years, the Department has not removed any memorial webpage in the IMS website. The Department reserves its right as the website administrator to remove concerned webpage when the situation warrants.
- (g) In 2018-19, the work of operating the IMS website as well as its new mobile app will continue to be absorbed by the Department's existing staff. The estimated amount of provision earmarked for maintaining the service is about \$0.11 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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