

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)087**

**(Question Serial No. 0986)**

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 of:

1. the service capacity of various crematoria managed by the Department, the actual usage figures and utilisation rates of the facilities of the crematoria in each of the past 3 years;
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) in each of the past 3 years;
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, the number of cases approved and the time required for processing the applications; and
6. the locations, quantity and utilisation rates of the temporary storage facilities for cremains provided by the Department.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hak-kan (LegCo internal reference no.: 25)

Reply:

1. Information on the number of cremation sessions released and sessions booked as well as the percentage of use in public crematoria managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in the past 3 calendar years is given as follows -

Name of Crematorium	2016			2017			2018		
	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	15 111	12 945	85.7%	14 869	14 161	95.2%	14 869	14 721	99.0%
Diamond Hill	8 578	8 519	99.3%	8 253	8 203	99.4%	8 270	8 242	99.7%
Fu Shan	5 895	5 814	98.6%	5 563	5 518	99.2%	6 148	6 101	99.2%
Kwai Chung	6 560	6 494	99.0%	6 622	6 558	99.0%	7 303	7 273	99.6%
Cheung Chau	1 105	119	10.8%	1 170	101	8.6%	1 222	133	10.9%
Wo Hop Shek	10 629	9 665	90.9%	8 611	8 268	96.0%	7 421	7 333	98.8%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>47 878</b>	<b>43 556</b>	<b>91.0%</b>	<b>45 088</b>	<b>42 809</b>	<b>94.9%</b>	<b>45 233</b>	<b>43 803</b>	<b>96.8%</b>

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 ashes interment in public niches
				At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance*	
2016	46 662	3 253	43 556	900	4 466	8 630
2017	45 883	2 962	42 809	966	5 573	2 935
2018	47 479	3 136	43 803	972	6 074	3 657

\* Inclusive of cases handled by private cemeteries.

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

3. New niches are allocated through computer balloting. The last public niches allocation exercise at Kiu Tau Road Columbarium was completed in March 2016. Thereafter, there was no supply of new public niches for allocation to members of the public generally.

The waiting list applies only to the allocation of niches returned to the Department. In the past 3 calendar years, on average about 324 niches per annum were returned to the Department. These niches were re-allocated according to the priority in the waiting list of the respective columbarium. The information sought is provided as follows -

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of applications on the waiting list</b>	<b>Average waiting time (months)</b>
2016	24 280	42
2017	29 168	46
2018	35 693	50

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

4. A total of 24 potential sites have been identified in the 18 districts under the district-based columbarium development scheme. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2018, the Government consulted the relevant District Councils (DCs) on projects at 14 sites to which the DCs indicated support or no-objection, which will altogether provide around 590 000 new niches. As regards the remaining projects, the Government will continue the planning work and consult the relevant DCs when ready. If taken forward, they will provide an additional 300 000 niches.

Among the projects which have gone through DC consultation, the Department has obtained funding approval for taking forward the following -

<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of niches</b>	<b>Anticipated Year of Completion</b>
Hong Kong Cemeteries and Crematoria Office (Part) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department at Wong Nai Chung Road, Wan Chai District	855	2019
Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun District	163 320	2019
Wo Hop Shek Cemetery (Phase 1), North District	44 000	2019
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension, Islands District#	1 250	2020
Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery Extension, Islands District	790	2020
Cape Collison Road, Eastern District	25 000	2022

# Not under the district-based columbarium development scheme

5. The Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) has received licence applications from 108 private columbaria (excluding those withdrawn or could not be further processed). As at 18 March 2019, the PCLB has approved the licence applications in respect of 2 private columbaria and given approval-in-principle to the licence application from another private one subject to compliance with certain requirements. The remaining applications are being processed. The time required to process licence applications varies from case to case, depending to a large extent, on whether the applications have already at the time of submission complied with all the requirements stipulated in the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) and those specified by the PCLB, and whether they are accompanied by all the required documents and information.
  
6. The Department at present has a total of some 35 000 temporary storage spaces for cremains 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 respectively. Those at the Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III have been open for use. The information sought in respect of these 2 facilities is provided as follows -

	<b>Kwai Chung Crematorium (For storage of cremains bags)</b>	<b>Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III (For storage of cinerary urns)</b>
<b>Capacity for temporary storage of cremains</b>	10 080 spaces	5 040 spaces
<b>No. of space occupied as at 28.2.2019</b>	1 126	2 471
<b>Usage rate</b>	11.2%	49.0%

In addition, some 41 000 temporary storage spaces will be made available in the coming 2 years. The Department will keep the usage of temporary storage facilities under review.

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