

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)122**

**(Question Serial No. 0716)**

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (4) Public Education and Community Involvement

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

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With regard to the green burial services, please advise this Committee of the following:

1. the number of cases of using the services of scattering cremains in the Gardens of Remembrance and scattering cremains at sea, the utilisation rate, and the percentage of these cases over the number of deaths in each of the past 3 years;
2. whether the current usage of green burial services meets expectations, and whether policy objectives regarding green burial will be formulated;
3. what measures will be taken to further promote green burial to the public, and whether there is any plan to establish a registration system similar to that for organ donation to help convey a person's wish for a green burial to their family members; if yes, the details; if no, the reason(s);
4. whether the Department has made reference to the modes of green burial in other countries (e.g. underwater cemetery and the creation of a memorial diamond in the United States; tree burial, spreading of ashes, sea burial and flower burial in Taiwan; and "zero burial" in Japan), with a view to expanding the scope of green burial services in Hong Kong to cater for the needs of local families; if yes, the details; if no, the reason(s); and
5. the manpower and expenditure involved in implementing the Department's work plan for promoting the green burial services in the coming year.

Asked by: Hon CHIANG Lai-wan (LegCo internal reference no.: 5)

Reply:

1. The information sought is provided as follows -

Year \ Number of cases	Scattering of ashes			Percentage of total no. of deaths
	In Gardens of Remembrance*	At sea	Total	
2016	4 466	900	5 366	11.5%
2017	5 573	966	6 539	14.3%
2018	6 074	972	7 046	14.8%

\*Inclusive of cases handled by private cemeteries.

2. The efforts we made over the years to promote green burial are bearing fruit. The number of green burial cases handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) in 2018 accounted for about 13.3% of the total number of deaths in Hong Kong, as compared to 4.6% in 2010. Taking into account green burial cases handled by private cemeteries, the aggregate number in 2018 accounted for 14.8% of all the deaths that year.

Green burial remains an important aspect of Government's policy on post-death arrangements, as it is a more sustainable way to dispose of cremated human ashes given the scarce land resources in Hong Kong. We will continue to improve green burial facilities and services, engage community stakeholders for support and step up our publicity and public education efforts.

3. The Department has been promoting green burial through different channels, including Announcement in the Public Interest on television and radio, promotion videos, posters and banners, a mobile application, a dedicated website, collaboration with non-government organisations and promotional activities at senior exhibitions, etc. We launched a Green Burial Central Register (GBCR) in January 2019 to encourage the public to register their wish for green burial. The registration, free of charge, can be made online, by post, fax or email. The Department will continue with its efforts to promote green burial including the GBCR.
4. The Department follows closely the efficacy of green burial measures being pursued elsewhere. We maintain an open mind as to the specific mode of green burial that may be taken in Hong Kong with due regard to local circumstances and sentiments as well as technical and other relevant considerations.
5. In 2019-20, green burial promotion will be coordinated by a dedicated team, comprising 5 officers and supporting staff. The estimated provision earmarked for promoting green burial in 2019-20 is about \$17.0 million.

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