

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**FHB(FE)064**

**(Question Serial No. 1722)**

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:

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

- a. 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;
- b. 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;
- c. the latest number of applications for public niches and the average waiting time;
- d. the number of new public niches to be provided in the next 10 years and their locations (please present the information in tabular form);
- e. 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
- f. 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.: 35)

Reply:

- a. 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 in the past 3 calendar years is given as follows:

| Name of Crematorium | 2017                               |                                  |   | 2018                               |                                  |   | 2019                               |                                  |   |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
|                     | 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      | 14 869                             | 14 161                           | 95.2%                                   | 14 869                             | 14 721                           | 99.0%                                   | 15 532                             | 15 240                           | 98.1%                                   |
| Diamond Hill        | 8 253                              | 8 203                            | 99.4%                                   | 8 270                              | 8 242                            | 99.7%                                   | 7 970                              | 7 961                            | 99.9%                                   |
| Fu Shan             | 5 563                              | 5 518                            | 99.2%                                   | 6 148                              | 6 101                            | 99.2%                                   | 6 413                              | 6 381                            | 99.5%                                   |
| Kwai Chung          | 6 622                              | 6 558                            | 99.0%                                   | 7 303                              | 7 273                            | 99.6%                                   | 7 752                              | 7 722                            | 99.6%                                   |
| Cheung Chau         | 1 170                              | 101                              | 8.6%                                    | 1 222                              | 133                              | 10.9%                                   | 1 340                              | 118                              | 8.8%                                    |
| Wo Hop Shek         | 8 611                              | 8 268                            | 96.0%                                   | 7 421                              | 7 333                            | 98.8%                                   | 8 300                              | 8 121                            | 97.8%                                   |
| <b>Total:</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>                            | <b>47 307</b>                      | <b>45 543</b>                    | <b>96.3%</b>                            |

b. 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* |  |
| 2017 | 45 883        | 2 962          | 42 809            | 966                                 | 5 573                      | 2 935                                    |
| 2018 | 47 479        | 3 136          | 43 803            | 972                                 | 6 074                      | 3 657                                    |
| 2019 | 48 706        | 2 780          | 45 543            | 899                                 | 7 010                      | 4 196                                    |

\* Inclusive of cases handled by private cemeteries

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

- c. At present, the Department allocates new extendable niches to eligible applicants by open drawing of lots and computer balloting rather than on a first-come, first-served basis. In late 2019, the Department completed the niche allocation exercise for two public columbaria, namely Tsang Tsui Columbarium (first phase) in Tuen Mun (providing around 20 000 niches) and Wong Nai Chung Road Columbarium (providing 855 niches). In the next few years, with new columbarium projects being completed one after another, it is estimated that no less than 20 000 niches will be available for allocation each year.
- d. Potential sites have been identified in various districts under the district-based columbarium development scheme. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2019, the Government consulted the relevant District Councils (DCs) on projects at 14 sites to which the DCs indicated support or no-objection, which would 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 would 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> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun District                        | 163 320                 | 2020                                  |
| Wo Hop Shek Cemetery (Phase 1), North District       | 44 100                  | 2020                                  |
| Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension, Islands District# | 580                     | 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

- e. As at 6 March 2020, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) has received a total of 122 licence applications (excluding those withdrawn by or returned to the applicants), of which, 5 have been approved, 2 have been approved in principle and 12 have been rejected. Therefore, the PCLB is still processing 103 licence applications involving 89 private columbaria. The time the PCLB takes to process a licence application depends on the actual circumstances of each case, particularly on whether the private columbarium has complied with all the requirements for licence application stipulated in the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) and the requirements specified by the PCLB (including the requirements relating to planning, land, buildings, fire safety, electrical and mechanical safety, management plan, right to use the premises, environmental protection, etc.), and whether the applicant has submitted sufficient documents showing that the private columbarium has complied with such requirements.
- f. At present, the Department provides some 64 000 temporary storage spaces for cremains at Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phases III and V, Cape Collinson Crematorium, Fu Shan Columbarium and Hong Kong Cemetery. The temporary storage spaces at Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III have been opened for public use. Regarding these two facilities, the information sought is provided as follows:

|   | <b>Kwai Chung Crematorium<br/>(For storage of cremains bags)</b> | <b>Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III<br/>(For storage of cinerary urns)</b> |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Capacity for temporary storage of cremains</b> | 10 080 spaces  | 5 040   |
| <b>No. of space occupied as at 29.2.2020</b>      | 1 405  | 3 492   |
| <b>Usage rate</b>                                 | 13.9%  | 69.3%   |

In addition, it is estimated that some 12 000 temporary storage spaces will be available by the end of 2020.

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