

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**S-FHB(FE)004**

**(Question Serial No. SV012)**

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:

Follow-up question to Reply Serial No. FHB(FE)165:

In the light of the slow progress of the Private Columbaria Licensing Board in processing licence applications, does the Department have any administrative measures to expedite the processing of the applications and streamline the relevant administrative procedures?

Asked by: Hon OR Chong-shing, Wilson

Reply:

With a view to expediting the processing of applications for specified instruments, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) promulgated on 30 August 2019 the implementation of three measures, namely granting exemption without requiring the applicant to restore the ash interment quantity first, making administrative arrangements for "Approval-in-principle for Temporary Suspension of Liability (TSOL) Application", and requiring applicants to submit the documents/information required for their TSOL applications on or before the deadline of 31 December 2019. After the expiry of the deadline, the PCLB has carefully examined the status of the documents/information received and has decided to cease the vetting of the TSOL applications submitted by 15 private columbaria, and will hold open meetings to determine these applications by batches. The list of the private columbaria concerned has been uploaded to the dedicated website for public information. As for other applications for specified instruments being processed, the Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) will continue to closely liaise with the applicants and the relevant departments, striving to assist the PCLB in expediting the vetting work.

Since the implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) (the Ordinance), the PCLB has formulated guidelines and procedures on various aspects. It has promulgated the Application Guide for Private Columbarium Licence and Other Specified Instruments, which set out in detail the requirements stipulated in the Ordinance and those specified by the PCLB for each type of application for specified instrument, and provided various templates (including those for the proposed plans, management plan and the

agreement for the sale of interment right, etc.) to assist applicants in making an application. Furthermore, to expedite the processing of the applications, the PCLB has continuously enhanced and updated these guidelines and procedures in the light of the circumstances encountered in the course of vetting the applications. The PCAO has also convened inter-departmental working meetings from time to time, during which the PCAO would discuss with the departments responsible for vetting applications on how to address the problems encountered and how to enhance the relevant process with a view to expediting the vetting work.

Notwithstanding the efforts of the PCLB and the PCAO to speed up the processing of applications for specified instruments and streamline the relevant process, the time needed to process a licence application depends on whether the private columbarium has complied with all the requirements for licence application stipulated in the Ordinance and those 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 to prove that the private columbarium has complied with the requirements. Upon receiving the documents or information required for an application, the PCAO will invite the relevant departments to provide comments. The applicant will then be asked to take necessary follow-up actions and submit reports, which will be forwarded to the relevant departments for their vetting. After confirming that a licence application has complied with the application requirements, the PCAO will arrange for the submission of the application to the PCLB for determination.

- End -