

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)010

(Question Serial No. 0381)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

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 Food and Environmental Hygiene 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 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 private columbarium licences received, the number of cases approved and the time required for processing the applications in each of the past 3 years; 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.: 1)

Reply:

- (a) Information on the number of cremation sessions released, the number of sessions booked and the utilisation rates of the 6 crematoria operated by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in the past 3 calendar years is as follows:

Name of Crematorium	2019			2020			2021		
	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked
Cape Collinson	15 532	15 240	98.1%	14 825	14 435	97.4%	16 888	16 654	98.6%
Diamond Hill	7 970	7 961	99.9%	8 341	8 324	99.8%	8 406	8 390	99.8%
Fu Shan	6 413	6 381	99.5%	6 094	6 067	99.6%	5 517	5 510	99.9%
Kwai Chung	7 752	7 722	99.6%	6 598	6 564	99.5%	7 166	7 145	99.7%
Cheung Chau	1 340	118	8.8%	1 346	136	10.1%	1 334	118	8.8%
Wo Hop Shek	8 300	8 121	97.8%	11 320	10 939	96.6%	10 397	10 289	99.0%
Total:	47 307	45 543	96.3%	48 524	46 465	95.8%	49 708	48 106	96.8%

- (b) Information on the number of deaths of local residents and their burial methods in the past 3 calendar years is as follows:

Year	Number of deaths	Number of burials#	Number of cremations	Number of cases of scattering of ashes		Number of ashes interment in public niches@
				At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance*	
2019	48 706	2 780	45 543	899	7 010	4 196
2020	50 653	2 852	46 465	854	6 822	39 598
2021	51 536	2 712	48 106	906	7 112	32 256

Inclusive of cases in private cemeteries and permitted burial grounds.

* Inclusive of cases handled by private cemeteries.

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

- (c) In addition to the comprehensive allocation of public niches once a year, the Department accepts applications from the public for new niches at Tsang Tsui Columbarium on a monthly basis starting from December 2020. About 1 700 new niches are provided each month. Therefore, there is currently adequate supply of public niches and applicants generally do not have to wait. For the annual allocation in 2021, the Department received 8 886 eligible applications. After the implementation of the monthly niche allocation arrangement, the Department received a total of 20 761 eligible applications as of January 2022. All of the above applicants were successfully allocated with niches.
- (d) The Government implements a district-based columbarium development scheme. Between the second quarter of 2011 and the end of 2021, the Government consulted the relevant District Councils on public columbarium projects at 14 sites, which would altogether provide around 600 000 new niches. Projects located at Diamond Hill in

Wong Tai Sin, Cheung Chau, Wong Nai Chung Road in Wan Chai, Lai Chi Yuen in Mui Wo, Tsang Tsui in Tuen Mun and Wo Hop Shek Phase I have been completed, providing around 210 000 niches. Two approved projects, located at Cape Collinson Road in Eastern District and Shek Mun in Sha Tin, are underway. They are estimated to be completed in 2022 and 2024, providing 25 000 and 40 000 niches respectively. The Government will continue to take forward other projects, with a view to securing the medium and long-term supply of public niches.

- (e) The time the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) takes to process a licence application depends on the actual circumstances of the case, particularly on whether the private columbarium has complied with all the requirements relating to licence application stipulated in the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630) 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. Information on the number of applications for private columbarium licences received and the number of cases approved in each of the past 3 years is as follows:

Year	Number of applications for licences received	Number of applications for licences / exemption approved ^{Note}	Number of applications for licences / exemption / temporary suspension of liability (TSOL) approved in principle ^{Note}
2019	1	4 licence applications	2 licence applications 1 application for TSOL
2020	0	2 licence applications	1 application for exemption 8 applications for TSOL
2021	1	2 licence applications 1 application for exemption	1 licence application 22 applications for TSOL

Note: Applications for licences, exemption and TSOL approved by the PCLB in a certain year are not necessarily submitted in the same year.

As of 28 February 2022, the PCLB was processing 223 applications for specified instruments submitted by 93 private columbaria.

- (f) At present, the Department provides some 75 590 temporary storage spaces for cremains at Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phases III, V and VI, Cape Collinson Columbarium, 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. Information on the quantity and utilisation rates of the temporary storage spaces for cremains at these two facilities is provided as follows:

	Kwai Chung Crematorium (For storage of cremains bags)	Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III (For storage of cinerary urns)
Capacity for temporary storage of cremains	10 080 spaces	5 040 spaces
Number of spaces occupied as at 28.2.2022	671	1 001
Utilisation rate	6.7%	19.9%

In addition, it is estimated that some 1 500 temporary storage spaces will be available for use by the second quarter of 2022.

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