

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 1533)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Regarding the promotion of green burial, please advise this Committee of:

- (1) the annual number of registrants of the Green Burial Central Register since its launch in January 2019;
- (2) the number of green burial cases (scattering ashes at sea/scattering ashes in Gardens of Remembrance) and their percentage out of the total number of deaths in each of the past 5 years; and
- (3) the Government's plans for publicity and promotion of green burial in 2023-24, as well as the estimated funding required and the ways to assess their effectiveness.

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (LegCo internal reference no.: 32)

Reply:

1. The number of registrants of the Green Burial Central Register in each year is provided as follows:

Year	Number of Registrants
2019	3 401
2020	2 333
2021	2 346
2022	1 492

2. The numbers of green burial cases and their percentages out of the total number of deaths in the past 5 years are provided as follows:

Year	Scattering of ashes			Percentage out of the total number of deaths
	In Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs)*	At sea	Total	
2018	6 074	972	7 046	14.8%
2019	7 010	899	7 909	16.2%
2020	6 822	854	7 676	15.2%
2021	7 112	906	8 018	15.6%
2022	8 437	1 012	9 449	15.4%

*Including cases handled by private cemeteries.

3. In 2023-24, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to promote green burial through different channels, including broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on television, radio and online platforms, producing promotional videos, displaying posters and banners, launching a thematic website and a mobile app, collaborating with non-governmental organisations and carrying out promotional activities at exhibitions for seniors. As a standing arrangement, the Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre of the Department located in the Kowloon Park in Tsim Sha Tsui provides an exhibition area with multi-media display equipment for promotion of green burial. In 2020, its green burial exhibition area was updated by adding an introduction to the Green Burial Central Register. To enhance public awareness of green burial, the Department will organise regular guided tours for the public and organisations to visit its GoRs for a better understanding of the relevant facilities and services.

To further promote green burial and upgrade the service quality, the Department has launched a design thinking consultancy study which is expected to be completed by mid-2023. The aim of the study is to gain a better understanding of the views of users, stakeholders and the general public so as to formulate more effective promotion strategies and measures for the promotion of public understanding and acceptance of green burial, enhance the green burial services provided by the Government and encourage more people to use the services. Adopting a design thinking user-based approach and centred on the needs of service users, the study seeks innovative and appropriate solutions and creates more possibilities. During the course of the study, the consultant will invite relevant stakeholders, including members of the public, representatives from the funeral trade, academics, operators of private cemeteries and representatives from non-governmental organisations, to take part in workshops and face-to-face interviews for a thorough understanding of their views.

The estimated amount of provision earmarked for promoting green burial in 2023-24 is about \$14 million. The Department will continue to review the effectiveness of its promotion of green burial through on-going monitoring and analysis of the statistics related to green burial, including the percentage of people adopting green burial, the utilisation of green burial facilities and the number of registrations in the Green Burial Central Register.

With active promotion of the Government, green burial has significantly become more popular in recent years. The number of green burial cases increased from 3 400 in 2013 to around 9 450 in 2022 (accounting for 15.4% of the total number of deaths in the year). Nevertheless, it still takes time to bring about the change of social norms and conventions. The Government will continue providing and enhancing green burial facilities and services, as well as strengthening public education and publicity, so as to gradually make green burial the mainstream arrangement of handling ashes, thus achieving the policy objectives of being more environmental friendly and sustainable development.

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