

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)143

(Question Serial No. 0239)

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

The cremations of bodies and skeletal remains in 2022-23 increased by 24% and 34% respectively as compared to the figures of 2021-22. Please advise this Committee of:

- (a) whether the number of cremations handled has reached the maximum service capacity of the existing crematoria. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will continue to take forward projects to provide more crematorium facilities in 2023-24. Please provide information on the estimated number of additional projects, the expenditure involved and their completion time.
- (b) whether the funeral trade (including practitioners of exhumation) faces the problem of manpower shortage. Has the Government considered allocating funding to support the training of funeral practitioners? If yes, what is the estimated amount of the funding and how many additional practitioners are expected to be brought to the trade? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chuen, Tony (LegCo internal reference no.: 28)

Reply:

- (a) During the fifth wave of COVID-19 epidemic in early last year, the demand for cremations once surged. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department put in place a number of measures, including operating most of its crematoria day and night, to ensure sufficient cremation sessions for booking by the families of the deceased. The demand for cremations has returned to normal after the epidemic subsided. The Government will continue to review the situation and take forward crematorium projects in a timely manner in response to the projection of the overall demand for cremations.
- (b) The Department maintains close contact with the funeral trade. It is understood that there was a slight shortage of manpower in the funeral trade when the epidemic was severe and the demand for funeral services soared in early 2022. As the epidemic subsided and the number of deaths dropped, the demand for funeral services has now returned to normal.

- End -