

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)154

(Question Serial No. 0108)

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 current number of registrants of the Green Burial Central Register and whether it meets expectations. If yes, the details; if no, the reason(s);
2. the number of burial cases by way of scattering ashes at sea or in Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs) and their percentage in the total number of deaths in each of the past 3 years;
3. the expenditure incurred by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in providing cemeteries and crematoria services (including the services of scattering ashes at sea and in GoRs) in each of the past 3 years; and
4. the current publicity and promotion work of green burial, as well as the staffing and expenditure involved.

Asked by: Hon YANG Wing-kit (LegCo internal reference no.: 27)

Reply:

1. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department set up the Green Burial Central Register in January 2019 to encourage the public to plan in advance their after-death arrangements by registering their wish for green burial and making it known to their families. As at 31 December 2022, over 9 500 members of the public have registered their wishes in the central register. Even if there is no prior registration, descendants can still adopt green burial for the deceased. The Department will continue providing and enhancing green burial facilities and services, as well as strengthening public education and publicity, so as to encourage the public to adopt green burial and register in the central register.

2. The numbers of green burial cases and their percentages out of the total number of deaths in the past 3 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	
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. The expenditure incurred by the Department in providing cemeteries and crematoria services, including the service for scattering of ashes at sea and in GoRs, in the financial years of 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 was \$445.9 million, \$490.8 million and \$565.6 million (revised estimate) respectively. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure by type of service.
4. The Department promotes 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 organises 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.

In 2022-23, green burial promotion was coordinated by a dedicated team comprising 5 officers and other supporting staff. The expenditure for promoting green burial in 2022-23 was about \$13 million.

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