

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

FHB(FE)056

Question Serial No.

Head : 49 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

0649

Subhead (No. & title) :

Programme : (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer : Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Food and Health

Question :

Please advise on the number of unallocated niches under the management of the Department, their distribution by location and the average waiting time for niche applicants. Is there any concrete plan for the expansion or construction of columbaria facilities, and what is the amount of expenditure involved?

Asked by : Hon. WONG Yung-kan

Reply :

As at end February 2009, there are 23 323 niches (23 250 new and 73 vacated ones) available for allocation in the eight public columbaria under the management of the Department, with 31 niches in Hong Kong, 18 512 niches in Kowloon and 4 780 niches in the New Territories (including 1 388 niches in the Islands District). These include 3 200 new niches in the Kwai Chung Columbarium and 18 500 new niches in the Diamond Hill Columbarium. Allocation of the new niches in the Kwai Chung Columbarium after balloting is now in progress and that for the Diamond Hill Columbarium will commence in the second quarter of 2009. For applicants queuing for vacated niches, the waiting time is about 12 to 52 months. For these cases, applicants having special preferences for a particular columbarium may have to wait longer. Also, applicants for vacated niches may concurrently apply for new niches when they are open for balloting, and their waiting time would depend on the availability of new niches.

We are planning to build new columbarium facilities providing for about 37 000 niches and a Garden of Remembrance at the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery for completion by around 2012. Details and the estimated cost of the project are being worked out. Separately, we are exploring the feasibility of constructing more Gardens of Remembrance at existing public cemeteries. There are suitable sites in the New Territories for constructing columbarium facilities, but such developments could only be realized with the support of the District Councils and the local community.

Signature _____

Name in block letters _____ W H CHEUK

Post Title _____ Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date _____ 17.3.2009