

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)103

(Question Serial No. 0796)

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 (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

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

1. the number of deaths of local residents and their burial methods as well as the percentage of people adopting green burial in each of the past 3 years;
2. the number of registrations in the Green Burial Central Register and the number of memorial webpages created for the deceased on the Internet Memorial Service website in the past 3 years;
3. the expenditure involved in the management of public columbaria and Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs) as well as the provision of ash scattering service at sea in each of the past 3 years, and the estimated expenditure for this year;
4. the work and the expenditure incurred for enhancing the ash scattering service and facilities of GoRs in the past 3 years, and whether there are plans to enhance the ash scattering service and facilities of GoRs in the future; if yes, the details and the expenditure involved;
5. the number of free memorial sails organised, the number of participants of each sail and the expenditure involved in each of the past 3 years, as well as the estimated number and expenditure of the free memorial sails to be held this year; and
6. the measures for the promotion of green burial, the staff establishment and expenditure involved in the promotion of green burial in each of the past 3 years, and the estimated staff establishment and expenditure for this year.

Asked by: Hon LEE Tsz-king, Dominic (LegCo internal reference no.: 9)

Reply:

1. The number of deaths of local residents, their burial methods, the number of green burial cases and their percentages of the total number of deaths in each of the past 3 years are as follows:

Year	Number of deaths	Number of burials [#]	Number of cremations	Number of ash interment cases in public niches	Scattering of ashes			
					At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs) *	Total	Percentage of the total number of deaths
2022	61 557	2 957	59 685	26 473	1 012	8 437	9 449	15.4%
2023	56 776	2 517	52 795	25 399	1 144	8 237	9 381	16.5%
2024	52 366	2 185	49 812	23 934	1 032	8 522	9 554	18.2%

Inclusive of burial cases in private cemeteries and permitted burial grounds.

* Inclusive of ash scattering cases handled in private cemeteries.

- The number of registrants of the Green Burial Central Register in each of the past 3 years is as follows:

Year	Number of Registrants
2022	1 492
2023	2 266
2024	3 250

The number of memorial webpages created for the deceased on the Internet Memorial Service website in each of the past 3 years is as follows:

Year	Number of newly created memorial webpages
2022	3 100
2023	2 988
2024	2 360

- The overall expenditure incurred by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in providing cemeteries and crematoria services, including the services for public columbaria and scattering of ashes in GoRs and at sea, in the financial years of 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 were \$558.8 million, \$536.4 million and \$572.7 million (revised estimate) respectively. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure by each type of service. The estimated expenditure of the Department for providing cemeteries and crematoria services, including the services for public columbaria and scattering of ashes in GoRs and at sea, in the financial year of 2025-26 is \$613.9 million.
- The Department launched a design thinking consultancy study in 2022 to gain a better understanding of the views of users, stakeholders and the general public so as to promote green burial and enhance the service quality. Taking into account the findings of the consultancy study, the Department has been rolling out appropriate and caring new facilities and services since April 2024 to enhance the sense of ritual in green burial. The enhanced ash scattering services in respect of GoRs include the display of a wooden sculpture artwork “To My...” for letter posting, provision of different options of ash scatterers in GoRs, the launch of a dedicated website on “After-death Arrangements” and the Cemeteries and Crematoria Services Platform, etc. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure by each type of service.

5. Since 2020, the number of memorial sails has increased from 4 to 8 each year (including 4 during the Ching Ming Festival and 4 during the Chung Yeung Festival), with an average of about 176 participants in each sail. The Department will increase the number of sails based on actual needs. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure by each type of service.
6. The Department has been promoting green burial through different channels in recent years, including organising exhibitions and talks, producing and broadcasting promotion videos, distributing publications, putting up posters and banners, collaborating with relevant non-governmental organisations such as tertiary institutions, secondary schools, religious bodies, District Councils and district organisations to enlarge its network with various sectors of society, as well as collaborating with non-governmental organisations to organise talks and guided tours and carry 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.

Since October 2023, the Department has been further promoting green burial on three fronts, namely broadening the coverage of promotions, enhancing understanding and discussion on green burial and pre-life planning, and liaising with different partners in the community to promote life and death education. The Department has been making use of a wide range of contents and channels to promote green burial to a wider audience. Activities targeting students of secondary schools and tertiary institutions have been organised to promote life and death education and green burial. Expos targeting at the middle-aged and the elderly, online publicity programmes, after-death arrangement information seminars and guided tours, etc. have been organised as well.

Green burial promotion was coordinated by a dedicated team comprising 5, 6 and 6 full-time staff in the respective financial years of 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25. The expenditure on promoting green burial in these years were about \$13 million, \$19 million and \$17 million respectively. It is estimated that the current staff establishment will remain unchanged in 2025-26, and the provision earmarked for promoting green burial in the year is about \$18 million.