

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)056

(Question Serial No. 2172)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

In connection with the public columbaria and crematoria in Hong Kong, please advise this Committee of:

1. the expenditure and manpower involved in each of the past 3 years;
2. the service capacity of each crematorium managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, as well as the actual usage figures and the utilisation rates of the facilities therein, in each of the past 3 years;
3. the number of deaths of local residents, with a breakdown by burial method (including scattering cremains at sea, scattering cremains in the Gardens of Remembrance, and interring ashes in public niches), in each of the past 3 years;
4. the latest number of applications for public niches and the average waiting time;
5. the number of new niches that have been planned and their locations (please present the information in tabular form);
6. the number of licence applications received under the Private Columbaria Ordinance, the number of cases approved and the time required for processing the applications;
7. the locations, quantity and utilisation rates of the temporary storage facilities for cremains provided by the Department.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hak-kan (LegCo internal reference no.: 20)

Reply:

1. The overall expenditure incurred by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department as well as the manpower involved in providing cemeteries and crematoria services in the past 3 years are as follows:

Year	Expenditure (\$ million)	Manpower (Number of staff)
2023-24	536.4	167
2024-25	566.4	160
2025-26 (Revised estimate)	594.3	169

2. The number of cremation sessions released, the number of sessions booked and the utilisation rates of the 6 crematoria operated by the Department in the past 3 years are as follows:

Name of Crematorium	2023			2024			2025		
	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked	Number of cremation sessions released	Number of cremation sessions booked	Percentage of cremation sessions booked
Cape Collinson	16 607	16 498	99.3%	16 234	15 808	97.4%	18 570	18 084	97.4%
Diamond Hill	8 347	8 334	99.8%	8 842	8 827	99.8%	8 077	8 062	99.8%
Fu Shan	6 198	6 182	99.7%	6 905	6 884	99.7%	7 320	7 294	99.6%
Kwai Chung ^{Note}	7 908	7 885	99.7%	4 810	4 789	99.6%	0	0	0.0%
Cheung Chau	1 340	137	10.2%	1 302	102	7.8%	1 342	109	8.1%
Wo Hop Shek	13 897	13 759	99.0%	13 613	13 402	98.5%	15 639	15 418	98.6%
Total:	54 297	52 795	97.2%	51 706	49 812	96.3%	50 948	48 967	96.1%

Note: Kwai Chung Crematorium has been temporarily closed since August 2024 for the replacement of cremators, which is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2028.

3. The number of deaths of local residents and their burial methods in the past 3 years are as follows:

Year	Number of deaths	Number of burials [#]	Number of cremations	Number of cases of scattering of ashes		Number of ash interment cases in public niches
				At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance*	
2023	56 776	2 517	52 795	1 144	8 237	25 399
2024	52 366	2 185	49 812	1 032	8 522	23 934
2025	51 750	2 091	48 967	937	8 951	23 486

Inclusive of cases in private cemeteries and permitted burial grounds.

* Inclusive of cases handled by private cemeteries.

4. The current supply of public niches is adequate. Since mid-2020, all eligible applicants have been successfully allocated with niches. In general, there is no need to wait.
5. The Government endeavours to implement the columbarium development plan. The locations of 8 completed columbarium development projects and the number of niches provided therein are as follows:

Completed columbarium development projects	Number of niches provided
Diamond Hill Columbarium Extension, Wong Tai Sin	1 540
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension	2 250
Wong Nai Chung Road Columbarium, Wan Chai	855
Lai Chi Yuen Columbarium, Mui Wo	790
Tsang Tsui Columbarium, Tuen Mun	163 320
Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase VI, Fanling	44 100
Cape Collinson-San Ha Columbarium, Chai Wan	25 340
Shek Mun Columbarium, Sha Tin	40 070

To meet future demand, the Department is taking forward projects at Wo Hop Shek, Siu Ho Wan and Kwai Chung, which are expected to provide over 380 000 niches. The Government will continue to review the situation to plan and take forward new projects, with a view to maintaining a stable medium- and long-term supply of public niches.

6. As at 28 February 2026, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) had received applications for specified instruments (i.e. licence, exemption and temporary suspension of liability) from a total of 147 private columbaria. The progress of the applications is summarised as follows:

	Licence approved	Exemption approved	Application approved in principle	Application refused/ withdrawn	Application pending decision
Number of private columbaria	14	10	71 ^{Note 1}	51	1 ^{Note 2}

Note 1: For these 71 private columbaria with approval-in-principle, although they still need to take actions in order to fulfil all requirements for a licence/an exemption, they are found to be in compliance with the relevant basic requirements for building, fire, and electrical and mechanical safety.

Note 2: PCLB has made certain decisions (including giving approval/approval-in-principle to or refusing the applications) on all applications for specified instruments in respect of pre-cut-off columbaria. A pre-cut-off columbarium refers to a columbarium that was in operation, and in which ashes were interred in niches, immediately before 8:00 a.m. on 18 June 2014. The above 1 columbarium pending decision is a post-cut-off columbarium.

The time PCLB takes to process a licence application depends on the actual circumstances of the case, particularly whether the private columbarium has complied with the requirements stipulated in the Private Columbaria Ordinance and those specified by PCLB (such as requirements relating to planning, land, buildings, fire safety, electrical and mechanical safety, management plan, right to use the premises, environmental protection, etc.), as well as whether the applicant has submitted the required documents and information to prove that the relevant requirements have been complied with.

7. At present, the Department provides some 77 000 temporary storage spaces for cremains at Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phases III, V and VI, Cape Collinson Crematorium, Fu Shan Columbarium and Hong Kong Cemetery. The temporary storage spaces at Kwai Chung Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III have been opened for public use. The number of temporary storage spaces for cremains at these 2 facilities as well as their utilisation rates are as follows:

	Kwai Chung Crematorium (For storage of cremains bags)	Wo Hop Shek Columbarium Phase III (For storage of cinerary urns)
Capacity for temporary storage of cremains	10 080 spaces	5 040 spaces
Number of spaces occupied as at 31 January 2026	260	298
Utilisation rate	2.6%	5.9%

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