

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)112

(Question Serial No. 0108)

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 (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

In 2026-27, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will oversee the implementation of the enhanced regulatory regime for private columbaria under the Private Columbaria Ordinance (Cap. 630). In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

- 1) the latest progress of licence applications submitted by private columbaria under the Ordinance, including the number of private columbaria that have ceased operation due to failure to meet the requirements of the Ordinance, the number of applications still under processing, etc., as well as the number of niches involved in these unlicensed private columbaria;
- 2) the number of private columbaria that contravened the Ordinance in 2025, as well as the follow-up actions that the Government has taken or plans to take accordingly; and
- 3) the resources involved in regulating private columbaria.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Chun, Jonathan (LegCo internal reference no.: 33)

Reply:

- (1) As at 28 February 2026, the Private Columbaria Licensing Board (PCLB) had approved a total of 14 licences and 10 exemptions (involving about 320 000 niches), and had refused licence/exemption applications from 33 private columbaria. PCLB is processing the licence/exemption applications from 72 private columbaria (involving about 420 000 niches), of which 71 have obtained approval-in-principle of their applications, while the remaining one is pending vetting of its application. For the aforementioned 71 private columbaria with approval-in-principle of their applications, even though they still have to take actions in order to fulfil all the 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. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the licencing regime in providing basic safety protection for users of private columbaria (including their staff and visitors), and bringing actual benefits to the general public.

Since the implementation of the Private Columbaria Ordinance (the Ordinance), 87 private columbaria have ceased operation (involving about 11 800 sets of ashes), 33 of

which had their licence/exemption applications refused by PCLB due to failure to meet the requirements of the Ordinance, while the remaining 54 either had not submitted an application or withdrawn their applications and ceased operation voluntarily. The Ordinance stipulates that a private columbarium ceasing operation is required to carry out the ash disposal procedures and return the interred ashes to their eligible claimants. Of the 87 private columbaria that have ceased operation, 77 have completed the ash disposal procedures, while the remaining 10 are still in the process.

- (2) In 2025, the Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department conducted about 360 inspections of private columbaria to monitor their operation and enforce the relevant requirements of the Ordinance. During the period, PCAO did not identify any contraventions of the Ordinance by these columbaria. In 2026, PCAO will continue the above monitoring and enforcement work, striving to ensure that private columbaria comply with all relevant statutory and government requirements.
- (3) In 2026-27, the estimated civil service establishment for PCAO is 63 posts and the estimated expenditure is \$71.84 million.

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