

立法會
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(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration)

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Minutes of meeting
held on Tuesday, 6 July 2010, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon WONG Yung-kan, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, MH
Dr Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP
Hon KAM Nai-wai, MH
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon WONG Yuk-man
- Members attending** : Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
Hon WONG Sing-chi
Hon Tanya CHAN
- Public Officers attending** : Item II
Prof Gabriel M LEUNG, JP
Under Secretary for Food and Health

Mr Francis HO
Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Food) 2

Ms CHU Lan-ying
Assistant Director (Operations) 3
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Mr YUEN Ming-chi
Pest Control Officer-in-charge
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Item III

Dr York CHOW Yat-ngok, GBS, JP
Secretary for Food and Health

Mrs Marion LAI, JP
Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food)

Mr Thomas CHOW Tat-ming, JP
Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands)

Mr CHEUK Wing-hing, JP
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Miss Annie TAM Kam-lan, JP
Director of Lands

Miss Ophelia WONG Yuen-sheung, JP
Deputy Director of Planning/District

Clerk in attendance : Miss Mary SO
Chief Council Secretary (2) 5

Staff in attendance : Ms Maisie LAM
Senior Council Secretary (2) 6

Ms Camy YOONG
Clerical Assistant (2) 1

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I. Information paper(s) issued since the last meeting

There was no information paper issued since the last meeting.

II. Rodent control in Hong Kong

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1960/09-10(03) and (04))

2. Under Secretary for Food and Health ("USFH") briefed members on the rodent prevention and control measures implemented by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in the past year, and the major initiatives in the coming year, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)1960/09-10(03)). Pest Control Officer-in-charge, FEHD ("PCO, FEHD") then highlighted the common species of commensal rodent in Hong Kong and some special features about rodents.

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3. Mr WONG Kwok-hing expressed concern about the rising trend in the territory-wide overall rodent infestation rate (RIR) since 2004. According to Annex 1 of the Administration's paper, the RIR of 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 was 4.4%, 2.9%, 4.8%, 6.3% and 6.1% respectively, as compared to 4.1% in 2004. He then asked -

- (a) whether, and if so, what follow-up actions had been taken by FEHD in respect of the recent incident whereby a rodent fell from the ceiling tiles of a restaurant in Shatin during operation hours; and
- (b) whether gratings had been installed at all underground drainage outlets in the vicinity of markets and fresh food outlets, given the effectiveness of gratings in preventing rodents from coming out from the drainage pipes on Chun Yeung Street in North Point after the installation.

4. In response to Mr WONG's concern about RIR, USFH advised that the overall RIR for the second half of 2009 and the first half of 2010 was 3.6% and 1.3% respectively, representing a significant drop as compared to that for the first half of 2009, which stood at 8.5%.

5. As regards Mr WONG's first question, Assistant Director (Operations)3 of FEHD ("AD(Ops)3/FEHD") advised that health inspectors and staff of the Pest Control Advisory Section of FEHD had immediately inspected the restaurant and the shopping arcade concerned the day after the incident. While the general hygiene condition was found satisfactory, there was minor sign of rodent infestation in the kitchen of the restaurant. In the light of this, appropriate advice had been given to the licensee of the restaurant. AD(Ops)3/FEHD further pointed out that under section 5(3) of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X), prosecution would only be instituted against the licensee if he/she knowingly suffered or permitted the presence of rats, mice or insects in food premises. Given that this was the first time that sign of pest infestation was detected in the restaurant concerned, a verbal warning was issued to the licensee who had subsequently employed contractor to strengthen rodent control measures. It was understood that the management of the shopping arcade had also engaged contractor to carry out pest control work on a monthly basis.

6. Responding to Mr WONG's second question, PCO, FEHD advised that gratings had been installed at the underground drainage outlets of the Central and Western District and Chek Lap Kok. FEHD would continue to work with the Highways Department and the Drainage Services Department in exploring whether gratings should be installed at other locations.

7. Noting that baits were not placed in Theatre Lane where a number of fixed pitch hawker stalls located and a tourist passing by was gnawed by a rodent in late May 2010, Mr KAM Nai-wai doubted about the criteria adopted

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by FEHD for selecting the localities for the territory-wide RIR surveys and the effectiveness of FEHD's rodent prevention and control work, including the reliability of the RIR surveys in monitoring the situation of rodent infestation.

8. USFH responded that at present, FEHD would set baits in selected localities to gather statistics on the ratio of baits bitten by rodent. The localities in the surveys covered all districts in the territory covering rodent infested spots or areas likely to have rodent problems. Twice a year, FEHD would place around 100 baits in each locality and each bait was placed at least 50 metres apart to ensure a sufficiently large area was covered. The RIR of a locality was calculated with reference to the ratio of baits bitten at that locality. The results of various localities, when aggregated, would give the territory-wide overall RIR. It should be noted that there was no internationally adopted RIR. FEHD had made reference to the practices adopted by different countries/cities and tried out different methods when devising its RIR. It had been concluded that the aforesaid method was the most suitable method for Hong Kong with respect to the local situation and environment.

9. The Chairman asked whether the Administration would consider placing baits at spots where there were reports that people were bit by rodents. USFH replied in the negative, and pointed out that the selection of localities in the RIR surveys was based on established scientific criteria. The localities were fixed for the whole year so as to enable FEHD to monitor the trend of rodent infestation. Where necessary, direct rodent control measures, such as trapping, might be carried out at spots where there were reports that people were bit by rodents so as to immediately suppress the rodent population.

10. Noting that raw sweet potato was now adopted for baiting, Mr KAM Nai-wai asked whether the Administration had intentionally changed the type of baits to one that was less attractive to rodent in order to lower the RIR. Mr Alan LEONG said that it was not very meaningful to make a year-by-year comparison of the overall RIRs if there had been changes in the localities of and the baits adopted for the survey.

11. USFH explained that the bait adopted for bait consumption survey was different from that for trapping. As rodent's incisors grew continuously throughout its life, they need to gnaw on object, such as raw sweet potato, to keep their incisors short. The texture of raw sweet potato would also enable the clear presence of a characteristic rodent gnawing mark, which was the criterion for defining a positive baiting point. In addition, raw sweet potato was unattractive to other animals which might coexist with the rodents in the target areas. USFH further said that there was reason to believe that the rodent gnawing incident in Theatre Lane was not related to the infestation of the district, as rodents should be most active when the activity of people was low. However, rodents which had consumed warfarin, a rodenticide, would bleed internally to death over a period of several days. They would feel thirsty in these few days,

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which could lead to erratic behaviour including coming out for water and attacking people even in the daytime.

12. Dr Priscilla LEUNG sought information on the number of people being bit by rodents in the past three years. USFH advised that FEHD had received five reports concerning people being bit by rodents in 2010. However, the Hospital Authority did not have the related figure, as this was not a disease included in the International Classification of Diseases.

13. Dr Joseph LEE asked whether the Administration had analysed the annual overall RIR to find out the reasons why the RIR for some districts, such as Wan Chai and Tai Po in 2009, were relatively low. He further enquired whether the Administration had set any target for lowering the annual RIR. Mr Alan LEONG asked about the reason why 2006 would record the lowest overall RIR (i.e. 2.9%).

14. USFH responded that FEHD would monitor the RIR and take a number of enhanced rodent control measures when a higher RIR had been recorded in a certain district, such as Kwun Tong in 2009. However, it would be very difficult for the Administration to find out the reasons leading to the attainment of a certain level of RIR or set any annual target to lower the RIR, as maintenance of personal and environmental hygiene by the public was indispensable to successfully control the problem of rodent infestation. In response to Dr LEE's further enquiry about the measures taken by the Administration to motivate the active participation of the community to achieve better results in rodent control, USFH advised that an additional health inspector had been deployed to each district since 1 April 2009 to promote and coordinate district pest control operations and to conduct public education and publicity activities at district level to enhance public awareness of pest control. FEHD had also strengthened liaison with other government departments and local organisations. Details of the activities held in 2009 to disseminate the message on rodent prevention and control were set out in paragraph 7 of the Administration's paper.

15. Dr Priscilla LEUNG was of the view that the Administration should strengthen its rodent prevention and control measures across the territory, as the arrangement to step up the rodent disinfection and cleansing work only in districts where a higher RIR had been recorded would make the rodents migrate from these districts to other districts. Mr WONG Yung-kan expressed similar views, and urged the Administration to study whether the recent rodent gnawing incidents reflected that rodent infestation had become a territory-wide problem.

16. USFH advised that it was rare that rodents would move to other districts given their limited range of movement. It should also be noted that in addition to RIR, frontline staff of FEHD would take into account the complaint figures and views of the local community and the public in targeting rodent prevention and control actions at areas where rodent problems existed. In addition, FEHD had been holding a territory-wide interdepartmental anti-rodent campaign on an

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annual basis. The anti-rodent campaign, implemented in two phases each year, had proven instrumental in reducing the rodent population and enhancing public awareness of the significance of rodent prevention in the community and the target areas in particular. The enhancement phase of the anti-rodent campaign 2010 would be held from 12 July to 10 September 2010. The Administration would also review the effectiveness of its rodent control measures regularly and consider the way forward as appropriate.

17. Noting from Annex 2 to the Administration's paper that the RIR for Wan Chai, Mong Kok and Tuen Mun was 0% in the second half of 2009, Mr WONG Sing-chi asked whether this implied that these districts were rodent-free. He further enquired about the yardstick for measuring the effectiveness of the rodent prevention and control measures of FEHD.

18. In response to Mr WONG's first question, USFH said that the lower or 0% RIR recorded in certain districts indicated that the rodent problem in public areas of these districts had been largely under control. It would however be difficult, if not impossible, for the territory to maintain rodent-free. As regards Mr WONG's second question, USFH reiterated that the effective control of rodent problems required not only efforts of the pest control team of FEHD, but also the active participation of the community, as elimination of food sources and harbouring places by the public to render an area unattractive to rodents was indispensable if anti-rodent work was to achieve optimal results.

19. Dr LEUNG Ka-lau queried the possibility of lowering the RIR of Tuen Mun from 16.7% in the first half of 2009 to 0% in the second half of 2009 and recording a 0% RIR in Wan Chai and Mong Kok in the second half of 2009. USFH responded that where necessary, he would be happy to discuss with members after the meeting the methodology of the RIR survey.

20. The Chairman considered that the Administration should also pay due attention to the need to dispose dead rodents in public areas. Citing the example that baits hanged so high for rodents to reach would affect the RIR so devised, the Chairman expressed concern about whether FEHD's contractor staff engaged in the provision of pest control services would have the expertise to carry out the rodent control work if the service contract was awarded to the tenderer with the lowest tender price.

21. AD(Ops)3/FEHD responded that there was no cause for such concern, as FEHD would assess both the technical merits and the tender price of a tender. In addition, a tenderer bidding for the contract for the provision of pest control services must meet the requirement that contractor manager and supervisory staff should have no less than five years' and three years' relevant working experience respectively, while contractor frontline staff should receive seven-hour training on pest control. To monitor contractors' performance in carrying out the pest control work, FEHD would conduct daily and surprise site inspections and review service reports submitted by contractors.

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AD(Ops)3/FEHD further said that an annual budget of around \$100 million was earmarked for the pest control work.

22. Dr Priscilla LEUNG maintained the view that the Administration should strengthen its rodent prevention and control measures across the territory, instead of only in districts where a higher RIR had been recorded. She further asked whether the Administration would consider adopting methods advocated by some Mainland experts to control the number of rodents, such as using rodent sterilants and eliminating their harbouring places.

23. USFH responded that following the World Health Organisation's relevant recommendations and technical guidelines, FEHD's existing rodent prevention and control work was an integrated approach which consisted of improving environmental conditions, applying poisonous baits and setting traps. This approach was basically the same as that adopted in major overseas and Mainland cities. To further enhance the methods and techniques for rodent prevention and control, FEHD maintained regular exchanges with relevant organisations of other countries/cities to share experience on pest control. For instance, rodent control experts from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention of Guangdong Province (廣東省疾病預防控制中心) and the Office of Patriotic Health Campaign Committee of Guangdong Province (廣東省愛國衛生運動委員會辦公室) had visited Hong Kong in April 2010. Generally speaking, the Guangdong Province and Hong Kong adopted a similar integrated approach towards rodent control, which was considered as an effective method in putting the rodent infestation problem under control.

[To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman suggested and members agreed to extend the duration of the meeting for 15 minutes to 1:00 pm.]

III. Public and private columbaria

(LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1960/09-10(01) to (02) and CB(2)2017/09-10(01))

24. Secretary for Food and Health ("SFH") briefed members on the public consultation document on the review of columbarium policy ("the consultation document") just issued by the Government, details of which were set out in the Administration's paper tabled at the meeting (LC Paper No. CB(2)1960/09-10(01)). Permanent Secretary for Food and Health (Food) then conducted a powerpoint presentation on the details of the proposals as set out in the powerpoint materials (LC Paper No. CB(2)2017/09-10(01)) tabled at the meeting.

Discussion

25. Mr WONG Kwok-hing welcomed the Administration's proposal to introduce a licensing scheme in the longer term to enhance regulation of private columbaria and asked about the legislative timetable in this regard.

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26. SFH responded that the drafting of amendments to the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) to provide for the licensing scheme for private columbaria would commence when a consensus on the proposal was reached within the community. It was expected that a lead time of about two to three years would be required for introducing the legislative scheme. Mr WONG called on the Administration to implement the scheme within the current legislative term. SFH responded that a legislative scheme, if found feasible, was not something that could be completed within a short period of time. He could not commit a definite timetable at this stage.

27. Mr Alan LEONG sought further information on the reason for not being able to implement the licensing scheme to regulate the private columbaria at an earlier time. Mr WONG Yuk-man criticised the Administration for failing to provide a concrete timetable for an early implementation of the licensing scheme. Mr WONG Yun-kan also saw no reason why the licensing scheme could not be introduced at an earlier time, as there was not much controversy surrounding the issue of regulating private columbaria.

28. SFH advised that experience showed that the formulation, legislation and implementation of policies having significant implications, such as tightening statutory control on smoking, would require three to four years' time. He did not foresee at this stage that the introduction of the proposed licensing scheme for private columbaria could take lesser time.

29. Whilst indicating the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong's support for the licensing scheme, Mr TAM Yiu-chung concurred with Mr WONG Kwok-hing on the need to expedite the implementation of the scheme in order to curb the proliferation of unauthorised private columbaria. He considered that given the large profit margin of the trade, the long lead time for implementing the scheme would give rise to the emergence of more private columbaria not in compliance with the relevant requirements on planning, construction design and building standards, as well as conditions of the land lease. Mr Alan LEONG and Mr WONG Yun-kan expressed similar concern.

30. SFH stressed that before the enactment of the new legislation, relevant Government departments, such as the Lands Department ("LandsD") and the Planning Department ("PlanD"), would continue to take enforcement actions against unauthorised aspects of private columbaria under their respective mandate. To help members of the public who were considering purchasing private columbarium facilities during the interim period to make informed choices, the Administration would publicise information on the private columbaria known to LandsD and PlanD, including information on whether such facilities occupied government land illegally as well as whether they were in compliance with the land leases and statutory planning requirements. In gist, List A would mainly set out the private columbaria compliant with the land lease, and the statutory planning requirements; and List B would list out other private

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columbaria that did not fall under List A. Apart from publishing the lists, the Administration would also strengthen consumer education on the choice of private columbaria and on the risks of patronising operators of private columbaria in List B. For instance, members of the public would be advised to ask the sellers of columbarium niches to provide them with full and complete information so as to check whether a specific columbarium facility was in compliance with the land administration and statutory planning requirements, and the land lease requirements. Legal advice should be sought where necessary.

31. Mr WONG Kwok-hing asked how long the private columbaria on List B would be required to meet the relevant requirements. He further asked whether the number of niches to be supplied in the 12 shortlisted sites listed in the Annex to the consultation document for the development of columbarium facilities could meet the demand in the next 20 years.

32. Responding to Mr WONG's first question, SFH said that it was expected that some private columbaria on List B would make genuine effort to meet the relevant requirements before the enactment of the new legislation, and those private columbaria confirmed to meet the relevant requirements would be moved to List A. After the enactment of the legislation, all pre-existing private columbaria would need to produce documentary evidence to the licensing authority to apply for a licence. Applications meeting the licensing conditions would be issued with a licence. In the case of unauthorised private columbaria which had submitted application for regularisation of their unauthorised aspects to the respective authorities and were awaiting the outcome, or those who were unsure if they could meet all the licensing requirements, they should apply for temporary exemption so that the operator would be able to continue with the operation in the absence of a licence on a temporary basis. It should be noted that an application for temporary exemption in respect of a private columbarium with unauthorised aspects would not be granted unless the applicant could satisfy the authorities that he/she had a reasonable chance of regularising his operation within a reasonable time, and that his/her operation would not pose immediate safety hazard. The temporary exemption would be time-limited, say, with a validity period of two and a half years. In addition, a private columbarium that had been granted temporary exemption had to freeze the number of niches and stop further sale of niches before a proper licence was issued.

33. As regards Mr WONG's second question, SFH said that it would be difficult to provide information on the number of niches to be supplied in the 12 tentatively shortlisted sites at this stage, as the Administration was still studying whether these sites would be feasible and appropriate to be developed for columbarium use. Once a site was confirmed to be suitable for columbarium development, the relevant District Council ("DC") would be formally consulted again. Flexible arrangements to promote local acceptance of columbarium development plans such as reserving a certain portion of niches for priority allocation to local residents in need could also be considered. The Government would also improve the outlook and layout of proposed columbaria through

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flexible design in order to ease the concern and anxiety of nearby residents. In the meantime, efforts would continue be made to identify suitable sites in all districts for columbarium development purpose.

34. Mr WONG Sing-chi urged the Administration to implement the licensing scheme as soon as practicable, as the existing enforcement measures were highly ineffective in deterring unlawful operation of private columbaria. He further asked whether, and if so, what enforcement actions had been taken against the existing unauthorised private columbaria, such as those in the Lo Wai village in Tsuen Wan, Chek Nai Ping village in Sha Tin, and Tei Tong Tsai in Lantau Island, in order to ease the concerns of nearby residents and protect the rights of consumers of private columbaria.

35. Permanent Secretary for Development (Planning and Lands) ("PSD(PL)") responded that at present, PlanD could issue an Enforcement Notice to the parties concerned under section 23 of the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131) if there was evidence of an unauthorised development. Upon receiving complaint of a breach of land use requirements stated in land leases, LandsD would deploy its staff to carry out inspection on the site concerned. Legal advice would be sought as necessary on the lease conditions which might be involved in the actual circumstances, and follow-up action taken as appropriate. It was expected that the transitional measure to publicise information on the private columbaria known to LandsD and PlanD prior to the enactment of the new legislation could facilitate the public to make informed decisions when purchasing private niches. As regards the alleged unauthorised developments on the sites referred to in paragraph 34 above, PSD(PL) undertook to liaise with Mr WONG after the meeting to further explain the actions taken.

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36. Director of Lands supplemented that if a private columbarium was found to encroach on unleased Government land, this would constitute illegal occupation of unleased land and LandsD would take land control action under section 6 of the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 28). In many cases, LandsD would issue a notice to require the illegal occupation of the unleased land to cease before a specified date, failing which LandsD might take further action against such illegal occupation. In respect of leased land, the land use was specified in the terms and conditions of the lease governing such leased land. Columbarium use might be explicitly or implicitly allowed or prohibited in a lease. Even if columbarium was not prohibited by the lease, there could be other forms of lease breaches, for example, the existence of unauthorised structures on a particular private lot. LandsD would take lease enforcement action against breaches of lease terms and conditions. Depending on the circumstances of individual cases, different actions might be taken at different stages by LandsD after consulting its legal advisers.

37. Mr WONG Sing-chi expressed concern that private columbaria not in compliance with the land administration and statutory planning requirements, and the land lease requirements would continue to emerge with the hope that

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they could continue their operation after the introduction of the licensing scheme. He asked whether consideration could be given to stipulating that pre-existing unauthorised private columbarium would not be granted a licence in the future.

38. SFH responded that eventually, all private columbaria in operation in the territory should be regulated by way of a licence. However, pre-existing unauthorised private columbaria needed to be allowed reasonable time for regularisation before they could be licensed. Hence, allowing them to apply for temporary exemption would be introduced as a transitional measure. SFH further remarked that the arrangement to publish information on the private columbaria known to LandsD and PlanD could serve the purpose of deterring unscrupulous traders from further developing unauthorised private columbaria. Mr WONG Sing-chi and Ms Tanya CHAN called on the Administration to publicise the two lists for public viewing as early as possible.

39. Noting that it would take three years to implement the legislation and another two and a half years for unauthorised private columbaria which had been granted temporary exemption to work towards applying for a proper licence, Ms Tanya CHAN considered the lead time for the full implementation of the licensing scheme too long to be acceptable. Ms CHAN then asked what measures would be put in place by the Administration during the interim period to curb the proliferation of unauthorised columbaria and address the related issues, such as the handling of the interred cremains if operators of existing unauthorised private columbaria ceased the business without liaising with the descendents concerned.

40. SFH responded that the short term and long term measures put forward in the consultation document, such as increasing the supply of columbarium facilities to meet the overall public demand, enhancing consumer protection in the choice of private columbaria and enhancing the regulation of private columbaria to ensure better handling of non-compliant cases, were aimed at curbing the proliferation of unauthorised columbaria, and at the same time minimising any unnecessary disruption to patrons of columbarium niches. SFH further said that thought should be given as to whether the existing arrangement of providing permanent niches/urn grave spaces should be changed so as to relieve the shortage and increase the supply of niches. Proposals being considered included the introduction of time-limited lease and incentive scheme for the return of niches. Mr Alan LEONG asked on what basis the Administration had drawn up the above conclusion. SFH advised that the suggestions were based on Mainland and overseas experience.

41. Ms Tanya CHAN noted that at present, the interpretation of "human remains" under private contracts, such as tenancy leases and land leases, would be made in accordance with the rules of interpreting private contracts and must not be treated regardless of the context. She asked the Administration whether it would clarify the interpretation of "human remains" under land leases to prevent

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descendents who chose to store the cremains of the deceased at home from contravening the land lease concerned.

42. SFH responded that the Administration would take into account the fact that some descendents would opt to store the cremains of the deceased at home when working out the legislative scheme for regulating private columbaria in future.

43. Taking the Hung Hom district as an example, Dr Priscilla LEUNG was concerned about the more prevalent practice of operating funeral parlours, which provided burial, encoffining and cremation services, in residential buildings in urban areas. She called on the Administration to step up its efforts to tackle the various problems arising from these operations.

44. SFH responded that the issue of unauthorised columbaria had been in existence for some time, any enforcement action against existing columbaria needed to take into account the views of the residents in the districts on the one hand, and on the other hand, that of those who had purchased niches therein. It was hoped that the publication of the consultation document would prevent the problem of unauthorised private columbaria from worsening, as it would be an offence to operate a private columbarium without a licence under the future licensing scheme. In the light of this, operators of existing unauthorised private columbaria should assess whether they had a reasonable chance of regularising their operation within a reasonable time so as to continue their operation either with a full licence or time-limited temporary exemption in the future. SFH remarked that the Administration had to ensure that the scope and level of regulation under the licensing scheme would be appropriate. This was by no means an easy task and the Administration welcomed views from the public and the stakeholders in this regard. SFH further said that to relieve the heavy demand for private niches which was the main reason for the upsurge in the number of unauthorised columbaria, efforts would continue to be made to increase the supply of columbarium facilities. This included identifying suitable sites for the development of columbarium facilities across the territory. He called on the relevant DCs to support the development plan put forward by the Administration when a site was identified to be suitable for columbarium development.

45. Mr WONG Yuk-man held the view that the Administration had the responsibility to ensure adequate supply of columbarium facilities, and should not shirk its responsibility by simply holding on to the argument of meeting objection from DCs in this regard. Mr WONG further said that the Administration should follow the practice of the Mainland authorities by subsidising the cost of scattering cremains at sea.

46. SFH responded that the Administration had placed considerable effort to increase the supply of columbarium facilities in the past few years. However, objection from DCs and local communities to the development of columbarium

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facilities in their districts had impeded a number of columbarium projects to cope with the public demand. SFH further said that to promote scattering of cremains at sea, FEHD had launched a pilot scheme on the provision of free ferry services starting from January 2010 to facilitate the public to scatter cremains in the waters of the east of Tung Lung Chau.

Motion

47. Mr WONG Kwok-hing moved a motion, seconded by Mr WONG Yung-kan, as follows -

"本會促請政府盡快在本屆立法會任期內完成立法以發牌制度規管私營骨灰龕，並進一步加強執法取締違法經營的私營骨灰龕。"

(Translation)

"That this Panel urges the Government to expeditiously enact the legislation to provide for a licensing scheme for regulating private columbaria within the current legislative term, and step up its effort in taking enforcement actions to proscribe unlawfully operated private columbaria."

The Chairman put Mr WONG's motion to move. All members present at the meeting voted in favour of the motion. The Chairman declared that Mr WONG's motion was carried.

48. The Chairman sought members' views on whether the Panel should receive views from deputations on the subject before the end of the consultation period on 30 September 2010. Members agreed to hold a special meeting on 20 September 2010 from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon for the purpose.

IV. Any other business

49. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:00 pm.