

Does Cremation Become More Difficult in Hong Kong?

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There were rumors that the government of Hong Kong would like to raise the cremation charge of the crematoria operated by the Food and Environment Hygiene Department (FEHD), from the current HKD1,220 to , eventually, HKD6,560 per case. This increase in cremation charges could cover the financial loss of HKD221million of the crematoria, claimed by the FEHD.

The current situation of under-supply of public cremation services in Hong Kong has been existing for a long time. As land becomes scarcer and thus more expensive, most citizens choose for cremation and storing ashes at columbaria after death, instead of a burial. According to FEHD figures, over 90% of the deceased were cremated in 2014. However, as there were not enough crematoria available, the waiting time for each deceased person to be cremated was much longer than the 15-day booking time set by the FEHD. Since the supply of public cremation services cannot meet the current demand, this issue have created a lot of disappointment for the families that encounter the long waiting times.

The issue has also stirred up voices among the funeral industries. Even though people increasingly chose cremations over burials, the funeral industry cannot meet the demand of the increasing number of deaths either. Overtime, funeral prices have been rising; however, the bodies of the deceased need to stay longer than ever in the public mortuary before the burial can actually be completed. The representatives of the local funeral industry raised their concerns as the booking system for public crematoria was not user-friendly and incompatible to industry practices. The booking time was, as mentioned, too short for processing the remains in the funeral homes.

The whole experience has become very unpleasant for the family members that are left behind, as they are already dealing with the loss of their loved one. Green burials can be a relief for families with financial burden as they don't have to pay for the costly cabinet that stores the ashes; but regardless of the 'greenness' of the burial, cremation cannot be skipped. So what would be the solution?

The second phase of the Cape Collison Crematorium started serving the public in the year end of 2015. More sessions of cremation have been provided to the public, yet the extra service capacity is still far from sufficient. It is reasonable to expect that the service capacity will remain the same

in the near future, unless there are new facilities available, or, a revision of the service delivery will be designed.

Source:

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