

Grave sweepers urged to keep environment clean during Ching Ming Festival

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (March 22) urged people visiting cemeteries and columbaria to pay respects to ancestors during the coming Ching Ming Festival to keep the environment clean and dispose of used containers properly to prevent mosquito breeding.

An FEHD spokesman said the department will provide special cleaning services at public cemeteries and columbaria during the festival period.

"We will deploy more staff to clear undergrowth and remove rubbish, and empty bottles and containers left behind by grave sweepers, to keep the environment clean. We will also remove water in containers and incense burners and level the ground surface to prevent accumulation of water. Furthermore, additional litter bins and toilet facilities will be provided," he said.

The spokesman urged the public to co-operate by clearing stagnant water and rubbish before leaving to prevent mosquito breeding. Containers such as lunch boxes, drink cans, plastic bags and buckets for burning incense should also be removed.

"As a precaution against mosquitoes, grave sweepers are advised to wear light-coloured long-sleeved tops and trousers and apply insect repellent to exposed parts of their body," he said.

In addition to public announcements, notices and banners will be displayed at public cemeteries and columbaria to appeal for public co-operation in taking anti-mosquito action. Managers of private cemeteries have also been advised to take similar precautions against mosquitoes.

To protect the environment and to prevent hill fires, members of the public are encouraged to replace incense burning with flowers when paying tribute to their ancestors. In addition, grave sweepers should take extra care when burning incense, which should only be carried out inside a designated joss paper furnace or iron bucket. People should make sure that all fires have gone out before leaving. Staff of the department will step up patrols at public cemeteries and columbaria during the period. In the event of a hill fire, grave sweepers should remain calm and immediately notify officers on-site.

The Government encourages the public to place additional cremated ashes into public niches to let loved ones stay together or to consider using a more environmentally friendly and sustainable way of handling ashes of the deceased, including scattering the ashes in Gardens of Remembrance or at sea.

Those who have created a memorial webpage on the website of the Internet Memorial Service (www.memorial.gov.hk) provided by the FEHD can pay tribute to their beloved online or through the mobile application anywhere and anytime. Family members and friends can also share memories and experiences through the webpage. FEHD has set up a Green Burial Central Register to enable the public to register their wish for Green Burial.

The spokesman also appealed to grave sweepers to make maximum use of public transport during the Ching Ming Festival. Access to Cape Collinson Crematorium, Diamond Hill Crematorium, Fu Shan Crematorium, Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Cemetery will be closed to all vehicles while the special traffic and transport arrangements are in operation, except for those with special permission.

For details of the special traffic and transport arrangements in the vicinity of cemeteries and crematoria during the Ching Ming Festival, please visit the Transport Department website (www.td.gov.hk).