

Man convicted for operating illegal private columbarium

A man was convicted of illegally operating a private columbarium, contravening the Private Columbaria Ordinance, by the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (October 9). He was fined \$30,000, with a criminal record registered.

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today that the Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) of the FEHD had earlier detected that a columbarium in Portland Street, Yau Ma Tei, was suspected to have rented out niches without a licence under the Ordinance. An operation was thus mounted at the premises. The operator of the unlicensed columbarium was arrested and prosecuted.

Under the Ordinance, any person who operates, keeps, manages or in any other way has control of a columbarium other than under a licence commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for three years, or on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for seven years.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "This department will continue to take stringent enforcement action against illegally operated private columbaria. Members of the public should not buy or rent niches from any unlicensed columbaria. If members of the public suspect any activities of illegally operating a columbarium, they should immediately make a report to the PCAO by calling the hotline 3142 2300."