

SOCIETY

Unclaimed bodies clog morgues, cost money

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A lack of regulations relating to the disposal of corpses that are unclaimed or caught up in legal disputes has left morgues clogged with bodies, some of which have been in cold storage for decades.

According to a recent report by Xinhua News Agency, the unclaimed bodies are not only taking up significant space but costing public money to preserve.

The report listed several cities as examples. Every year, there are between 1,300 and 1,400 unclaimed bodies in morgues and funeral parlors in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. In Jinan, Shandong province, more than 80 corpses have gone unclaimed. And in Kunming, Yunnan province, more than 70 are in long-term storage.

The report cited an official in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, as saying the city has around 200 long-term bodies in morgues. One has been in storage for 21 years.

"On average, there are around 10 unclaimed corpses at funeral parlors in every county or city in the region, which doesn't include those left in the morgues of hospitals," Wang Qingmin, an official from the region's Civil Affairs Bureau, was quoted as saying.

21 years

Time one body has been kept in a morgue in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia autonomous region

The Regulations on the Management of Funeral Affairs, issued in 2012, does not regulate what must happen to bodies that no one claims or those that cannot be buried for other reasons. Because of the lack of laws or regulations, government departments usually choose to preserve the bodies, in case relatives turn up to claim them, Wang said.

The rules stipulate that claimed bodies must usually be cremated, and that the cremations must be carried out after a death certificate is issued by police authorities or a medical facility.

Some of the bodies in storage have been kept because they are connected to unresolved disputes, such as a car accident or medical grievance. Police departments and medical facilities have been cautious about issuing death certificates under such circumstances.

"The cost of storing these corpses presents a huge burden for the funeral parlors and include the cost of refrigeration and facility maintenance," said Zhang Tao, an official at Lianhuashan funeral parlor in Jinan.

One such corpse, which has been kept at the facility for 12 years, has likely cost around 200,000 yuan (\$31,000) to store, Zhang said.

"These bodies have also resulted in a lack of available space for the bodies of people who are recently deceased."

Even when local governments have regulations in place about dealing with unclaimed corpses, police authorities have been reluctant to issue death certificates because of the lack of a national law, according to a worker at a hospital morgue in Hohhot, who didn't want to be identified.

"Some police officers dealing with complicated cases in which there are fatalities are unwilling to issue death certificates to avoid being implicated in legal disputes between parties involved the deaths," the worker said.

ENTRY-EXIT



A sniffer dog checks luggage at Changle International Airport in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in March. SONG WEIWEI / XINHUA

Inspection dogs helping protect ports, borders

Two new breeding and training centers aim to keep up with massive demand

By WANG XIAODONG
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More inspection dogs are expected to be deployed at entry-exit ports across China after two national centers for breeding and training are built within the next five years, according to China's top inspection and quarantine authority.

Faced with increasing pressure to ensure biosafety, entry-exit inspection and quarantine authorities will also increase their capacity to keep out hazardous elements such as diseases, viruses and invasive species. This includes improving the warning system and replacing X-ray machines used for

handling mail and parcels with more precise CT scanners, Zhao Zenglian, deputy head of the Department of Supervision on Animal and Plant Quarantine under the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, said on Tuesday.

Nearly 300 dogs are deployed at ports in China, but this is far from enough, Zhao said.

"Considering that there are around 280 major ports in China, 1,000 inspection and quarantine dogs are needed," he said. "But we lack regulated breeding and training centers."

Of the two national centers, he said, one is being built in Beijing, which is likely to be completed within two years,

"The use of such dogs can help improve the rate of successful interception by 30 percent,"

Zhao Zenglian, official from the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine

and the other center is very likely to be built in Guangdong province.

The first inspection dog was put into service in 2001, Zhao said. "The use of such dogs can help improve the rate of successful interception (of harmful materials) by 30

percent," he said, noting that compared with traditional detection equipment, dogs have some advantages.

"Unlike equipment which is cold and tends to keep passengers away, many passengers try to approach these dogs when they sniff around and do their job because they are cute," he said.

Three breeds — springer spaniels, labradors and beagles — are favored for inspections in China.

Last year, inspection and quarantine authorities across China intercepted 1.04 million batches of harmful species, an increase of nearly 30 percent over 2014, according to the administration.

The number of harmful species intercepted has been increasing by an average 26.8 percent annually over the past five years, the administration said.



Locomotive crash kills 2

Two people died in a hospital of severe injuries after a freight locomotive crashed into a shunting locomotive in Fangchenggang, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, local railway authorities said on Wednesday. Another person was injured. The crash happened on Tuesday afternoon. An investigation into the cause is underway.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

DEVELOPMENT

Tongren taps tourism for growth and poverty reduction

By ZHAO HUANXIN and YANG JUN

One airport, two provinces and the legend of three bronze figures: Tongren is counting the ways it is preparing for an economic takeoff.

The city in southwest China's Guizhou province shares an airport in a unique arrangement with neighboring Fenghuang, a Hunan province scenic spot known as "China's most beautiful old town". The unconventional facility is a symbol of how a Chinese city that is far-flung, but endowed with natural beauty, is striving to catch up to the rest of the country's economic prosperity and poverty reduction by developing its tourism industry, said Xia Qingfeng, Tongren's top official.

"We expanded and renamed the Tongren Daxing Airport as Tongren Fenghuang Airport in 2008, and the number of air travelers surged to 350,000 last year from around 8,000 five years ago," Xia said. "We anticipate half a million will fly to visit Tongren and Fenghuang this year."

What is in short supply in many parts of China is abundant in Tongren, including pristine air and water, villages with well-preserved ethnic cultures, and extensive virgin forests, Xia said. Legend has it that some fishermen found three bronze figures in a river during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), giving the city its name.

The mountainous city of nearly 4.5 million people is counting on tourism for an economic boom, and for

improving the income of its 690,000 impoverished residents, Xia told China Daily.

To make the city more accessible to the outside world, more direct flights will be added in the coming five years to link Tongren with coastal and central provinces, he said.

Tongren is home to 28 ethnic minority groups who make up 70 percent of its population. The city has revamped 76 villages into demonstration tourism villages that showcase the ethnic diversity of culture and lifestyle, Xia said.

Last year, at least 30 million people traveled to Tongren, helping the tourism sector rake in revenue of 23 billion yuan (\$3.5 billion).

"We are now in a tourism era, with so many better-off people wanting to see the

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Xia Qingfeng, top official of Tongren, Guizhou province



world," Xia said. "We anticipate 'blowout growth' for the city's tourism industry, with hoards of travelers and their money flowing in this year."

Xia envisions a 30 percent surge in both travelers and revenue this year.

Xia said Tongren's tourism sector is open to cooperation

SCIENCE

Weightless tests push boundary of knowledge

By CHENG YINGQI
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With the launch of China's first microgravity satellite, SJ-10, early on Wednesday, scientists look forward to the results of experiments that could shed new light on a range of questions, from biology to the physical properties of substances, in a weightless environment.

The recoverable satellite blasted off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu province at 1:38 am, carried by a Long March 2-D rocket. It will stay in orbit for several days before its return capsule heads back to Earth. The orbital module will continue to conduct experiments for a few more days.

"Microgravity — the environment created during weightlessness — is an extreme condition that changes every physical phenomenon we are familiar with, which is why microgravity research has been a science hot spot internationally," said Hu Wenrui, the chief scientist on the SJ-10 project, who is a prominent physicist and a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

For example, liquids cannot be contained without the use of containers on Earth. But in a microgravity environment, liquids can float without a container, which makes it possible to determine the material's characteristics, to understand its chemical reactions and to develop new materials with new functions.

Microgravity experiments are normally carried out in various space facilities, such as space stations, shuttles, research rockets or orbiting satellites. The SJ-10 is designed to return to Earth.

"The recoverable satellite is a useful and efficient tool for microgravity experiments, compared with space stations and research rockets," Hu said.

A research rocket, the cheapest option for such experiments, can create, at most, a 10-minute period of weightlessness for microgravity experiments. A typical satellite can stay a couple weeks in gravity-free space.

Space shuttles and orbiting space stations are much more costly, yet less flexible than satellites.

"For example, we are going to send some stem cells and early mouse embryos into space to study their development under microgravity conditions," said Kang Qi, a researcher at the Institute of Mechanics under the science academy and the chief designer of the experiment systems



A Long March 2-D rocket carrying the SJ-10 Satellite blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Jiuquan, Gansu province, on Wednesday. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA

aboard SJ-10.

"To minimize the influence of gravity on them, we will assemble the samples only eight hours ahead of the launch, which would not be possible if we were using a manned spacecraft."

Designed in the shape of a bullet, SJ-10 will carry out 28 scientific inquiries. Eleven of the experiments will be recovered on Earth, while the others will remain in orbit.

The experiments include fundamental research in fluid physics, research to enhance fire safety for manned spaceflight, some biological experiments to improve human health and experiments related to coal combustion and materials processing.

"We are not repeating any experiments that have been carried out by other countries. Every single experiment is new," Hu, the chief scientist, said.

China's space science authority, known as the Commission on Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense before its functions were merged into the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and other ministries, has solicited experimental projects for the SJ-10 since 2005.

The 28 experiments selected were chosen from 218 candidates collected from research institutes and universities, both in and out of China.

The project was temporarily laid aside as a result of institutional adjustments in China's space science bodies. The science academy restarted it in 2011 as part of the larger Strategic Priority Program on Space Science, which plans to launch four satellites by the end of 2016.

The first in the program — focused on dark matter in the universe — was launched in December and has begun to collect data.

retail and restaurants, and that is important for Tongren to lift its rural poor above the poverty line," he said.

Around 30,000 people are now working in the tourism industry in Tongren. Xia said the number will expand tenfold if tourism and related industries develop as designed, a great step in reducing the number of poor residents.

Another poverty-relief solution for Tongren is an increase in e-commerce in rural areas.

Villagers in Tongren have set up at least 500 online shops, each with transactions of at least 200,000 yuan, on the e-commerce platform Taobao, according to the city's official statistics.

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