

《关于殡葬改革的英文报道》

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China's death care industry is said to be one of the top profiting industries in the country. The price of cemetery plots has been going up since 2000, while the costs of death care services are being fuelled by elaborate traditional burial rituals. Many complain they can't even afford to die.

In a bid to curb the trend, China has made efforts in recent years to ease the market and advocate economical and green burial rituals. Since the reforms, local officials now control the prices of basic death care services both in public and private cemeteries. Prices of other optional services and products are market-oriented but still under official supervision.

"We basically have three levels of death care services. The basic level costs about 3,000 yuan. Medium level service costs about 6,000 yuan, while the high-end service costs about 10,000 yuan. Basic death care services are free of charge for low-income families." said Fan Ning, Customer Service Center Dir., Taiyuan Yongan Cemetery.

Fan says the medium level service combination is the most popular and their total business volume has been rising by about 20 percent a year.

The death business keeps growing. But space for burials is becoming more and more limited. In recent years, many local governments across the country have been promoting "green burials", which are space-saving and environmentally friendly. One example is the "tree burial", something that fits well with the environmental needs of Northern China.

In a tree burial, the deceased's ashes are put in a degradable box and buried under a tree with a small gravestone above. At the Taiyuan Yongan Cemetery, a tree burial costs about 7,000 yuan - much cheaper than a tomb plot which costs about 25,000 yuan on average.

"The green burial business has been increasing gradually in recent years. We sold 22 trees last year. So far this year, we've already sold more than a dozen." said Zhang Hongfei, Director, Taiyuan Yongan Cemetery.

Despite the government's efforts, China's death care industry still has some problems, such as illegal intermediary agents and the illegal sale of deceased's private information in some hospitals. Experts are calling for stricter laws and regulations to streamline the industry, making it serve more as a kind of public and social service.