

6 dead, 3 missing in north China house blast



CCTV News.

A house explosion on Saturday night killed six people, with another three missing, in north China's Shanxi Province, local authorities said Sunday.

Seven people were pulled out of debris after the blast happened around 10:30 p.m. Saturday at the Nanhuan West Road in Tiantan Town in the city of Linfen, said an official with the city's publicity department.

Six of them died, and rescuers are searching for the other three missing.

Another six people at the blast spot are slightly injured.

Cause of the case is being investigated.

The EU sets out its stall

The bark of the EU was less aggressive than the spin prior to the formal document. Mr Tusk tells us "The Union will be constructive throughout and

will strive to find an Agreement". He sees the UK as a "close partner in the future". He welcomes the UK's understanding that you cannot belong to the single market without accepting all the four freedoms.

It is also clear that the EU would like a free trade agreement, and an agreement on intelligence, counter terrorism, defence and security co-operation. Indeed, why wouldn't they, when you see how it is so strongly in their interests. The Union is worried that the UK might seek to negotiate and talk to individual member states likely to be sympathetic, so the document seeks to ban any talks by the EU 27 individually with the UK about Brexit. The Union has moved its language a bit on the rights of UK citizens living on the continent and EU citizens living in the UK, in recognition that they need to reassure and secure the position of all involved. It still falls short of the full guarantee that should be offered.

So what are the catches? There are three main obstacles to an agreement latent in this proposal. The first is the continued provision for a "divorce bill". The language is less inflammatory and there is some understanding that any payment has to be based on "legal and budgetary commitments". So maybe they will see there are no financial obligations beyond our continuing budget contributions up to the date of departure.

The second is wish to delay work on a future trade relationship and other matters concerning our future co-operation until a second phase. This is reinforced by saying that any free trade agreement has to be "finalised and concluded once the UK is no longer a member state". If by this they mean the day after we leave we can register a free trade agreement already sorted out then this is fine, but if they mean we sit down and sort one out after departure they will have to adjust to high tariffs against their strong agricultural exports to the UK from Day One.

The third is the mantra that "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". This could delay necessary agreements over matters like citizens rights, and makes the likelihood of all the EU member states and the other EU institutions agreeing that much more difficult.

The UK in response to this should continue with warm words and friendly intent, but also should inject some pace and energy into the timetable. Uncertainty helps neither side. It will be no easier to agree these things in 2019 than now. Lets flush out whether they are serious about wanting a deal. If they are not, lets just leave.

[Tibetan communities embrace new funeral customs](#)

Rinchen, 40, works at a crematorium in a Tibetan community in northwest

China.

For Tibetans, sky and water burials have traditionally been the most common funerary customs. Cremation has only been used in the modern age.

The Chabcha town funeral management house, where Rinchen and his wife work, was founded in 1982. It was one of the first crematoriums in Qinghai province, home to over 1.37 million ethnic Tibetan people.

"It took a very long process of consulting high monks before establishing the crematorium. The site for the cremation house was chosen by the tenth Panchen Lama," said Duraga, deputy director of the civil affairs bureau of Gonghe County, which administers Chabcha Town. Chabcha is the seat of the government of Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai.

"In less developed Tibetan communities, such as herding areas, people still favor sky burials. But in the city, more Tibetan people now choose cremation," said Duraga.

There are four cremation houses at the crematorium.

"In the 1980s, only a few dozen people were cremated here each year," said Rinchen, whose father-in-law was the first person to run the crematorium.

Last year, 352 people were cremated there, and most of them were Tibetans from Qinghai, Gansu and northwest Sichuan.

Families usually put the ashes in bags made of white cloth and scatter them at sacred mountains and lakes.

"People scatter the ashes at sky burial sites at Qinghai Lake and the Yellow River, which flows through the county," said Rinchen.

"Before each cremation, families of the deceased invite monks from nearby monasteries, such as Khyamru Monastery, to give sermons and preside over the ceremonies," he said.

Rinchen and his wife Tsering make sure the lamps are always lit. Their family now lives at the crematorium.

"When I started living here, I often felt scared. Now I light lamps every day, touching the prayer wheels. It is a job to keep me busy," said Tsering.

"I use my hands to help the deceased finish their last step in the world. I feel it is the natural thing to do," she said.

About a few hundred miles to the southwest, Chindo County, in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, is an area where sky burials are more common. Most of the people in the county are herders.

Tashi, who performs sky burials, often has to get up early to prepare for the rituals.

In sky burials, bodies are fed to vultures and other predatory birds. Buddhists believe in a cycle of rebirth and advocate kindness and charity. The spirit of the dead is believed to leave the body the moment a person dies and the dead should be fed to hungry vultures as a last token of charity.

Tashi is a monk at Lab Monastery. He started performing sky burial rituals in 2011. The Serkhang sky burial site, located about 3,800 meters above sea level at the foot of a snow-capped mountain, receives over 30 bodies every year.

“A burial starts at four in the morning and lasts about seven hours. I make sure every detail is right for the ritual,” he said.

However, sometimes sky burial rituals do not go so smoothly. Environmental drives to kill rats on grasslands have led to a decline in the number of vultures and eagles.

“Some people may still honor tradition, but others may want the modern methods of burial. The people will choose on their own,” said Wang Fayu, director of social affairs office of the Qinghai Provincial Civil Affairs Department.

A crematorium has been set up in every Tibetan autonomous county in Qinghai to provide diverse choices for the people, said Wang.

“The living buddhas said in the end, humans return their bodies to nature. No matter which method chosen, it is to show respect to the deceased and give solace to the living,” said Rinchen.

[Nation calls for greater poverty relief effort](#)

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee held a meeting Friday, calling for greater effort on poverty alleviation.

Members of the bureau heard reports on provincial Party committees and governments' achievements and evaluation work on poverty relief in 2016 during the meeting, presided over by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

China has set 2020 as the target year to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, and “the hardest part is to lift poor rural population and counties out of poverty and eradicate poverty on a regional basis,” said a statement issued after the meeting.

The meeting agreed that achievements made during the past years showed that

the goal could be accomplished as long as practical and solid effort was made and current policy and work intensity maintained.

Salient problems, however, remain, including low quality poverty relief, a lack of targeted measures and lax supervision of funds, according to the statement.

Stressing strict requirements during poverty elimination, the CPC leadership said the work report system and responsibility system for poverty elimination must be effectively enforced.

In addition, strict evaluation and inspection of poverty alleviation must be carried out to ensure goals are achieved.

The people's interests should be put in first place in advancing poverty relief, while leading officials at various levels should strengthen their sense of mission and responsibility and synergize efforts, the statement said.

Poverty relief is the historical mission of the CPC and the responsibilities of heads of Party committees, governments and departments at various levels, it said.

The meeting also called for effort to consolidate the foundations of precise poverty alleviation, take corresponding measures and inspire officials and people in areas with poverty.

The requirements of strict Party governance should be implemented comprehensively and responsibilities on poverty elimination should be fulfilled faithfully, the statement said.

Evaluation of poverty relief should play its role and pragmatic work styles be followed, it noted.

China aims to reduce the number of rural residents living in poverty by over 10 million in 2017, including 3.4 million relocated from inhospitable areas.

[62 overseas NGOs set up offices in China after registration under new law](#)

A total of 62 overseas NGOs have registered with public security authorities and set up representative offices on the Chinese mainland after a new law regulating overseas NGOs took effect Jan. 1.

Among the 62 NGOs, which include those in fields such as the economy, education and environmental protection, 27 are from the United States, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the US-China Business Council.

The other 35 come from 14 regions and countries, including the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Britain, Germany and Switzerland.

“With simplified procedures and less time spent, the registration went smoothly under the new law,” said Jacob Parker, vice president of China Operations of the US-China Business Council, an organization of American companies in business with China.

The new law, which was adopted last year, requires all overseas NGOs to secure approval from Chinese authorities before they operate on the Chinese mainland.

The Ministry of Public Security and provincial police departments are responsible for registration and regulation, according to the law.

To facilitate the process, public security authorities have interviewed a number of overseas NGOs about their problems during registration and responded to over 12,000 questions from more than 780 overseas NGOs.

Besides the registered NGOs, there are now more than 170 others going through the registration procedure.