

WORLD: PLA NAVY HOSTS WPNS **P.18**

NATION: DIVORCE RATE ON THE RISE **P.26**

# BEIJING REVIEW

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## THE ONE-MORE-CHILD POLICY

Easing of Family Planning to reshape urban life

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## EDITOR'S DESK

**02** A Change in Population Policy .....

## THIS WEEK

## COVER STORY

## WORLD

**18** Maritime Security Cooperation .....

Naval symposium promotes peace at sea .....

## NATION

**26** A Weaker Union .....

Divorce rate sparks debate .....

**28** Bringing Buddha Into Modernity .....

Monasteries reach out with technology .....

## BUSINESS

**34** An Appeal to Common Sense .....

Taiwan stands to gain from new pact .....

**36** A Change of Game Plan .....

Appliance makers' low-price backlash .....

**38** Market Watch .....



## COVER STORY

### Deciding on a Second Child

Changed policy offers choices for families

## NATION

### P.24 | Hunting for Fugitives

Capturing corruption abroad

## BUSINESS

### P.32 | Digging Deeper

Private capital to re-energize energy markets

## CULTURE

**42** An Issue of Grave Concern .....

Archaeologists race against robbers .....

**44** A Searing Threat .....

Ancient towns hit by string of fires .....

## FORUM

**46** The Politics of Grief .....

Social relations in life and death .....

## Essay

**48** The Decline of Washington .....

U.S. hegemony weakens worldwide .....

→ World

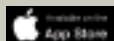
### P.20 | On the Go

PLA Navy hosts multinational drills



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# EDITOR'S DESK

## A Change in Population Policy

China's recent relaxation of its family planning policy is a landmark change that is poised to contribute to a lasting and balanced development of the population and a healthy, stable development of society as a whole.

The new policy allows couples to have two children if one of the parents is an only child. Previously, a couple in urban areas could generally only have a second child if both parents were only children.

Issued last November, the policy is now in full swing in Beijing, Shanghai and China's wealthy Guangdong Province among other places. Hopefully, it will be extended to cover the whole country in 2015.

The commonly known one-child policy, which was implemented in the late 1970s, once made great contributions to easing pressures caused by rapid population growth in the underdeveloped economy. However, as circumstances change, its disadvantages—such as creating an aging society and labor shortages—are obvious.

According to statistics, the population aged 60 and above in China accounted for 14.3 percent of the whole in 2012. By the end of 2013, the population of this group had reached 200 million. This figure is predicted to hit 300 million in 2025 and 400 million in 2030.

If the country didn't reform its population policy, it would witness a sharp decrease in labor within a few decades. If that were allowed to occur, China's economic vigor and international competitiveness would be crippled. Against this backdrop, relaxing the family planning policy has become a common aspiration for all.

This relaxation marks an improvement of the existing family planning policy. On the one hand, it can recover the sex ratio of births to a normal level, strengthen a family's risk-resistance ability and allow for greater care of the elderly. On the other hand, it can continue to help stabilize a moderately low birth rate, thus slowing down the sharp drop after the population has reached an inevitable historical summit. Additionally, it can maintain a reasonable structure of labor.

As for concerns about creating a new baby boom, sociologists have argued there is no need to worry. The relaxation may lead to a moderate rebound of population, but a major baby boom is highly unlikely because the number of families meeting the requirement to have a second child is smaller than first estimated. During the past three decades since the family planning policy was carried out, terms were strictly implemented mainly in cities. In the vast rural areas, families continued to have more than one child, particularly if the first is a girl. ■

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# A WALK FOR PEACE AND REMEMBRANCE

Queen Margrethe II of Denmark walks across Peace Square during her visit to the Memorial Hall for the Victims of the Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Forces in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province, on April 27.

The memorial hall commemorates more than 300,000 Chinese innocents who were killed by Japanese invaders after they occupied the city on December 13, 1937.

The queen, along with her husband, Prince Consort Henrik, paid a state visit to China from April 24 to April 28 at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping.



## Arts Gala

French soprano Julie Cherrier rehearses at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing on April 28 before a concert celebrating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and France.

The concert was also the opening performance of the 14th Meet in Beijing Arts Festival. A total of 280 shows will be performed by 212 art groups from 33 countries and regions during the art festival that will last until May 25.

## Navigation System

A domestically developed, high-precision global positioning system went into operation in China on April 25, further improving the capability of the country's satellite navigation system.

Xihe, named after an ancient Chinese god, was developed by the National Remote Sensing Center of China (NRSCC) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST). It has an outdoor accuracy of 1 meter and an indoor accuracy of 3 meters, the NRSCC said.

Xihe can identify and connect with various satellite navigation systems, including China's homegrown Beidou, which many other positioning systems cannot identify.

The system has undergone trials in Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin, according to the NRSCC.

Jing Guifei, NRSCC Deputy Director, said that the system will play an

important role in many areas, including positioning, transportation and the Internet of Things.

"It will also help extend the application of the Beidou system, which enjoys a smaller market compared with other international competitors," Jing said.

According to a white paper issued by the MOST in 2013, the Xihe system will cover more than 100 Chinese cities and benefit more than 100 million households by 2020.

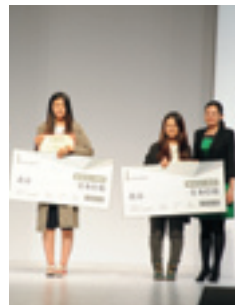
## Environmental Law

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, on April 24 voted to adopt revisions to the Environmental Protection Law, the first change to the legislation in 25 years.

With the addition of 23 articles, raising the total to 70 compared with 47 in the original law, the revised law sets environmental protection as the

## CRADLE FOR DESIGNERS

Winners of the 2014 Copenhagen Fur Emerging Designer Award are honored at Tsinghua University Graduates Show on April 24, which was organized by the internationally renowned Copenhagen Fur in conjunction with the university's Academy of Fine Arts



country's basic policy.

The law gives harsher punishments to environmental wrongdoing, and has specific articles and provisions on tackling smog, promoting environmental protection awareness and protecting whistleblowers.

It says that citizens should adopt a low-carbon and frugal lifestyle and perform environmental protection duties, and nominates June 5 as Environment Day.

The revised law will go into effect from January 1, 2015.

## Clean Days

More than half of the number of days in the first three months of the year saw clean air, according to results from 74 Chinese cities that were monitored.

Forty-eight days out of 90, or 53.1 percent, had clean air, up 5.1 percent year on year, the Ministry of Environmental Protection revealed on April 25.

The 10 cities with the most serious air pollution were Xingtai, Shijiazhuang, Baoding, Tangshan, Handan, Hengshui, Jinan, Xi'an, Langfang and Chengdu—most of which are in the country's north—the ministry said in a report.

Air pollution in the region surrounding Beijing was worse than other parts of the country during the three months, and the 13 monitored cities in the region experienced days that failed to meet standards 69.4 percent of the time, while the national average stood at around 47 percent.

There was a slight drop in the density of PM2.5 and PM10 (airborne particles less than 2.5 micrometers and 10 micrometers, respectively) in March compared with the same period of last year, the report added.

## Work Safety

Chinese prosecutors will strengthen supervision over officials whose dereliction of duty has caused unsafe work conditions, an official from the Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) told Xinhua News Agency on April 27.

Prosecutors will target malpractice by officials that leads to major accidents or the postponement of rescue operations, the unnamed official with the SPP's Duty Dereliction and Rights

Infringement Bureau said.

Priorities will include supervision of the transportation of dangerous chemicals, natural gas and oil, infrastructure construction, the environment, and food safety. Officials who cover up, delay or give false information about work safety accidents, or instruct others to do so, will be punished severely, according to the SPP official.

SPP statistics show that from 2008 to 2013, nearly 5,500 officials were investigated or prosecuted for dereliction of duty in more than 4,000 cases. Prosecutors have recovered economic losses worth more than 2 billion yuan (\$320 million).

## Beijing Treaty

China's top legislature ratified the Beijing Treaty on audiovisual performances on April 24, a document overseen by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

During its bimonthly session, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ratified the treaty, which was submitted by the State Council, China's cabinet.

Approved in June 2012 at a WIPO Diplomatic Conference in Beijing, the 30-article treaty is expected to protect the rights of film actors and other performers.

The treaty stipulates that contracting parties shall provide enforcement to ensure effective action against infringement on intellectual property rights covered by the treaty as well as remedies to deter further infringements.

**"The treaty is expected to boost China's commitment to international cooperation in film and performance, and improve China's legal system regarding copyright protection."**

Yan Xiaohong, Deputy Director of the State General Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television



## Cartoon City

A woman paints cartoon characters on her car during an automobile parade held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province on April 27.

Around 100 cars featuring colorful cartoon paintings took part in the parade as a warm-up for the 10th China International Cartoon and Animation Festival, which opened in Hangzhou on April 28.

## Sturgeon Reserve

A nature reserve will be set up to protect Chinese sturgeons, a threatened species of fish, at the Yangtze River estuary in Shanghai, authorities announced on April 24.

The reserve, to be located in Yingdong Village in Chongming County, will cover an area of about 55,900 square meters, according to the Shanghai Agriculture Committee (SAC).

The conservation zone will include laboratory buildings, fish rescue

facilities, an outdoor fishpond and an artificial purification system for wetland water. Construction will begin in May, the SAC said.

The reserve is expected to help sturgeons as well as other endangered aquatic animals survive and breed. It will also contribute to scientific research.

Believed to have lived at the same time as dinosaurs, *acipenser sinensis*, the Chinese sturgeon, has existed for more than 140 million years. The fish, sometimes called "aquatic pandas," is listed as a wild creature under state protection.

## Flowery Fun

A major international horticultural exposition opens in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, on April 25.

The expo will last for 184 days with the theme From the Earth, For the Earth, and it marks the fourth time a Chinese mainland city has hosted a horticultural event of this scale after Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, Kunming in Yunnan Province and Shenyang in Liaoning Province.

A wide variety of gardening styles are on display. Plants cultivated from seeds carried back by China's first manned deep-sea submersible *Jiaolong* are also on display.



## Policy Stability

China's economic growth in the first quarter was within a proper range, so the government will maintain the continuity and stability of its macroeconomic policies, the top leadership announced on April 25.

Since the beginning of the year, the country has been forced to face economic challenges and difficulties head on but the economy has generally had a good start, said a statement released after a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, chaired the meeting to discuss the economic situation and related matters.

"The economic situation was generally in line with the government's macroeconomic regulation and developmental outlook," the statement said.

Economic fundamentals remain

unchanged and the country should coordinate the measures required for stabilizing growth, promoting reforms, adjusting structure, improving livelihoods and preventing risks, the statement said.

"Both fiscal and monetary policies will be kept steady to nurture expectation for sound development and a transparent macro policy environment," it said.

## The Yangtze Belt

Premier Li Keqiang promised on April 28 to help group 11 provincial-level regions into the largest development network in China—an economic belt along the 1,800-km "golden waterway" of the Yangtze River.

It is a logical step to use the Yangtze River to connect the relatively developed east China with central and west China, Li said.



## FEAST YOUR EYES

An eaglewood sculpture is displayed at the ninth China (Putian) Straits Arts and Crafts Fair, which opened on April 28 and attracted more than 600 enterprises from both sides of the Taiwan Straits

Li discussed the plan with leaders from the 11 municipalities and provinces in Chongqing, and he said it will generate a powerful driving force behind the nation's next round of economic development.

The 11 regions in the proposed economic belt include Shanghai and Chongqing municipalities, along with Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou provinces.

"The well-being of people along the Yangtze River—about 580 million in 2012—is vital to the country's overall development," Li said.

## Alibaba's Purchase

China's e-commerce giant Alibaba has stepped up its investment in cultural and digital entertainment industries with a strategic deal with leading online video source Youku Tudou.

The deal, announced on April 28, means Alibaba and private equity firm Yunfeng Capital will buy an 18.5-percent stake in Youku Tudou for \$1.22 billion.

Alibaba holds 16.5 percent while Yunfeng Capital possesses 2 percent. Alibaba's founder and chairman Jack Ma is a co-founder of Yunfeng Capital.

The cooperation will support Youku Tudou's innovation in the newly emerging area and accelerate Alibaba's digital entertainment and video content strategy, said Ma.

It will also extend the Alibaba ecosystem and bring new products and services to Alibaba's customers, he said.

The deal will help Youku Tudou build a cultural entertainment platform that integrates online and offline entertainment," said Victor Koo, Chairman and CEO of Youku Tudou.

## Loans for Small Firms

Outstanding loans from both domestic and foreign-invested banks to the nation's small and micro-sized companies stood at 13.7 trillion yuan (\$2.22 trillion) as of the end of March.

The value represented an increase of 16.3 percent year on year, with the growth rate picking up by 2.1 percentage points compared to the growth level at the end of last year, according to data released by the People's Bank of China,



## Global Test

An ARJ21-700 regional airplane, which completed test flights in natural icing conditions in Canada, returns to an airport in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, on April 28.

It also marked the completion of a 30,000-km flight around the world by the airliner, China's first domestically made turbofan-engined jet.

The test flights have also demonstrated the airliner's stability and its ability to cope with extreme weather, said He Dongfeng, President of the Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China, Ltd., its manufacturer.



## Two Birds, One Stone

Villagers attend to a beehive in an orange garden in Zigui County, central China's Hubei Province.

Every spring, the blossoms of orange trees cover more than 300,000 *mu* (20,000 hectares) on both sides of Xiajiang River. Local farmers produce honey by beekeeping in orchards, which in turn facilitates the pollination of orange flowers.

China's central bank.

In the first quarter, new yuan-denominated loans to small and micro-sized firms totaled 560.9 billion yuan (\$89.69 billion), accounting for 30.5 percent of new loans to all companies.

## Mobile Payment Thrives

The total trading volume of the third-party payment business rose 43.2 percent year on year to 17.9 trillion yuan (\$2.9 trillion) in China in 2013.

The country's third-party mobile payment market also grew as transactions exceeded 1.2 trillion yuan (\$191.88 million), up a staggering 707 percent year on year, according to a report by the Institute of Finance and Banking under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The People's Bank of China (PBC),

## ORDERS FLOODING IN

A worker in a Zhejiang-based knitwear company is busy producing football fan scarves for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil



the central bank, suspended code-based payments and virtual credit cards on March 14, and set a limit on the size of third-party payments, causing discontent in some financial quarters.

Fan Shuangwen, Deputy Director of the PBC's Department of Payments and Settlements, said the limit guaranteed security rather than restricting consumption, and would maintain transparency in the process and prevent money laundering.

## Direct Money Exchange

China set up a currency-trading center on the China-Viet Nam border on April 26, which will help end rampant illegal private currency trading.

The ASEAN Currency Business Center, initiated by the Agricultural Bank of China (ABC) in Dongxing,

southwest China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, will allow direct convertibility of the Chinese yuan and the Vietnamese dong, said Zhang Xiaogao, General Manager of the International Business Department of ABC's Guangxi Branch.

The center, the first of its kind in China, will boost convenience for business people in the border areas, Zhang said, adding that it could help end rampant illegal private currency trading.

Exchanges between the two currencies had to be conducted via the U.S. dollar in local banks, contributing to the business of traders that provide illegal services of direct yuan-dong exchanges in the cross-border region.

## Downward Trend

The State Information Center (SIC), a government think tank, on April 28 forecast China's economy to expand by around 7.4 percent in the second quarter, with notable downward pressure and rising financial risks.

The SIC predicted the economy will stay on a steady yet slightly downward track in the second quarter, as growth momentum remains sluggish amid slower income growth, easing investment and weak global recovery.

The center named risks from the property market, local government debt and overcapacity as major threats to financial stability.

After years of intense growth, China's red-hot housing market is showing increasing signs of cooling down. In some cities like Hangzhou and Shanghai, there have been reports of price cuts to promote sales.

"Market expectation change and radical adjustment in the sector may lead to systematic risks that will affect related industries and broader financial and economic stability," the SIC warned.

It advised the government to accelerate implementation of proactive fiscal policies and flexible use of prudent monetary policies.

When appropriate, China should consider lowering the reserve requirement ratio for banks, the SIC said.



## UKRAINE

Pro-Russian activists stand guard outside the regional telecenter after occupying the building in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk on April 27



## PALESTINE

Palestinian Fatah delegation chief Azzam al-Ahmed (left), Hamas prime minister in the Gaza Strip Ismail Haniya (center) and Hamas deputy leader Musa Abu Marzuk celebrate in Gaza City on April 23 after the leaders agreed to form a unity government in April



## OUTER SPACE

A U.S. astronaut takes a selfie during a repair mission outside the International Space Station on April 23



## BRITAIN

Participants wearing neon-colored clothing pose for pictures during the 5-km Electric Run around Wembley Stadium in London on April 26



## INDONESIA

Armed Air Force soldiers secure the Virgin Australia 737-800 plane, on which a drunk passenger sparked a hijacking alert during the flight from Brisbane heading for the Indonesian resort island of Bali, on the tarmac at Denpasar Airport in Bali on April 25



## SOUTH KOREA

Prime Minister Chung Hong Won (center) exits a press conference in Seoul on April 27 after tendering his resignation over the sinking of a passenger ferry that left more than 300 people dead or missing



## EMERGENCY APPOINTMENT

China Resources (Holdings) Company, one of China's largest state-owned conglomerates, named Fu Yuning as its new chairman, replacing Song Lin, who is under investigation and was dismissed from his post. The company made the decision during a meeting in Hong Kong on April 23.

Born in 1957, Fu obtained his Ph.D. in Offshore Engineering from Brunel University in Britain. He was the former chairman of the state-owned China Merchants Group Ltd. and a chairman of China Merchants Bank. China Resources owns a group of companies ranging from real estate to gas.



## Mobile Internet Challenges BAT

**Caijing Magazine**  
April 21

China's Internet business has enjoyed rapid growth over the past two decades. The growth of e-business has long been driven by advertising, but now this commercial pattern will be altered greatly by mobile Internet technology.

Since last year, the oligarchy of Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent (BAT) in the Internet sector has been challenged by the rise of the mobile Internet, which is expected to provide the online gateway to the offline market worth tens of trillions of yuan and transform the landscape of domestic Internet industry.

The technical barrier of the Internet is disappearing. More and more corporations based in traditional businesses have taken part in the emerging Internet market competition. With the help of mobile Internet technology, corporations are able to create new business and consumption demands.

The BAT, in an effort to maintain and expand their monopoly positions, has made separate acquisitions in nearly every segment in the last couple of years. Segment leaders like Xiaomi (a smartphone producer) and Meituan (an e-business developer) will probably become industry heavyweights, and today's small players may even become the true disruptors of the industry in the future.



## A Step Forward on Land Reform

**Caixin Magazine**  
April 21

The southern city of Shenzhen is always at the forefront of China's reform policy. Recently, the special city forged a groundbreaking trail to grant legal status to some residential buildings and allowed them to be sold on the market.

The residential buildings, constructed on collectively owned land, mostly in rural areas, had been banned from being sold. They are only used as residential houses for the land owners, or local rural residents. Any trade of these residential buildings with limited property rights is deemed illegal. In the last decade, amid fast-expanding urbanization, a large number of natural villages have become parts of urban areas. But these residential houses on collectively owned land have never been permitted to be traded or mortgaged on the market as free as other commercial real estates.

Although the Central Government decided to reform the current policy on collectively owned land in 2013, the ban on buildings constructed on collectively owned land has not yet been overturned. Even Beijing has taken strict measures to

**“Some government positions draw no applications, such as in remote areas or those requiring specialist skills, whereas applications flood in for positions with lower *hukou*, Chinese household registration, and educational requirements.”**

**Li Zhong**, a spokesman for the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, on progress of this year's provincial recruitment programs for civil servants

**“The increasing pressure on the patent application processing each year shows how big the industry is going to be, and the industry is far from realizing its potential.”**

**He Hua**, Deputy Director of the State Intellectual Property Office, at an intellectual property symposium held by the All-China Patent Attorneys Association on April 26



forbid and dismantle illegal buildings in the megacity since last year.

However, illegal buildings on collectively owned land are necessary to meet the strong demands of accommodating rural migrant workers who flock into cities to make a living. In Shenzhen, for example, around 31.62 percent of newly migrated people are living in illegal buildings with limited property rights.

Shenzhen's pilot might end the government's strict control on land resources and alter the economic growth relying heavily on land development.

## Controversial Vehicles Inspection

*People's Daily*  
April 23

The mandatory annual inspection of vehicles aims to check automobiles and find potential safety hazards in order to help reduce road traffic accidents. Is it really necessary for all drivers and passengers? The public have expressed doubts and called on the government to cancel the annual safety inspection.

Automobile owners complain that inspection procedures are too complicated. While cars have increased rapidly in recent years, the number of vehicle safety inspection stations is not able to meet the strong demands. As a result, long wait times have become a burden. Moreover, vehicle inspection stations are often accused of providing

poor services and collecting unauthorized fees. Furthermore, the safety inspection cannot ensure strict inspection over vehicles. Some car owners even bribe the staff of inspection stations to acquire qualified certification.

If the government eases control on vehicle inspection monopoly and allow automobile service providers to offer inspection services, the current problems could be resolved. In fact, many authorized automobile maintenance-service providers are capable of inspecting the safety of cars. It will be more affordable for consumers to receive inspection of their special service providers. As the quality of cars improves, some experts even argue that vehicle inspections should be done every three or five years.



## STAR MAKES COMEBACK

China's national swimming team lifted the ban on competing and endorsement on Olympic champion Sun Yang on April 24, who was suspended from the national team for months after a feud with his coach and being caught driving without a license.

Sun will be trained under former head coach Zhang Yadong after his long-term coach, Zhu Zhigen, resigned due to health reasons.

The super star is training for the National Championships, which will be held on May 12. After training with the national team for just one month, Sun has lost 11 kg and is back in fighting form.

Sun, 22, swept the 400-, 800-, and 1,500-meter freestyle golds at the Barcelona World Championships in 2013 and won two gold medals at the 2012 London Olympics in the 400- and 1,500-meter freestyle.



**“Delaying retirement can increase individuals’ net income in the labor market to offset the net living expenses increases brought by longer life expectancy, so that the financial balance during a person’s life cycle can be restored.”**

**Zhao Yaohui**, a professor of the National School of Development, Peking University, when revealing his study concluding that the young generation would have to devote 41 percent of their compensation to supporting retirees by 2050 if China doesn't raise the compulsory retirement age

**“I have been an archivist for more than 20 years. However, after reading these documents and the bloody scenes they depict every day, I have begun to suffer from enormous psychological pain.”**

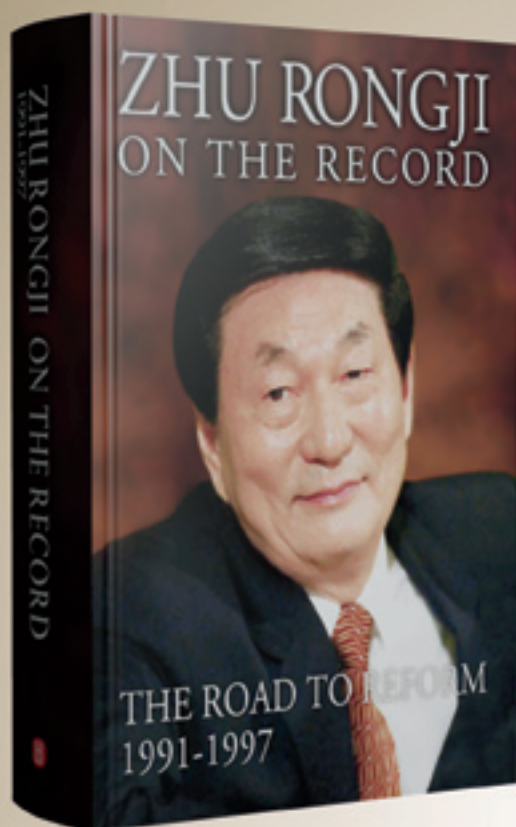
**Zhao Yujie**, a senior archivist at Jilin Provincial Archives, on his experience of organizing and translating documents on biological experiments on humans carried out by the Japanese army during its occupation of northeast China in World War II



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He has been as direct in his editorial selections as he was in his leadership style in office and has not shied away from difficult or sensitive issues.

—— Henry A. Kissinger

It is a unique historical document of China's unprecedented economic evolution over the past few decades. And it gives a fascinating insight into the political work of Zhu Rongji—an exceptionally gifted statesman and a dear friend.

—— Helmut Schmidt

# Zhu Rongji on the Record

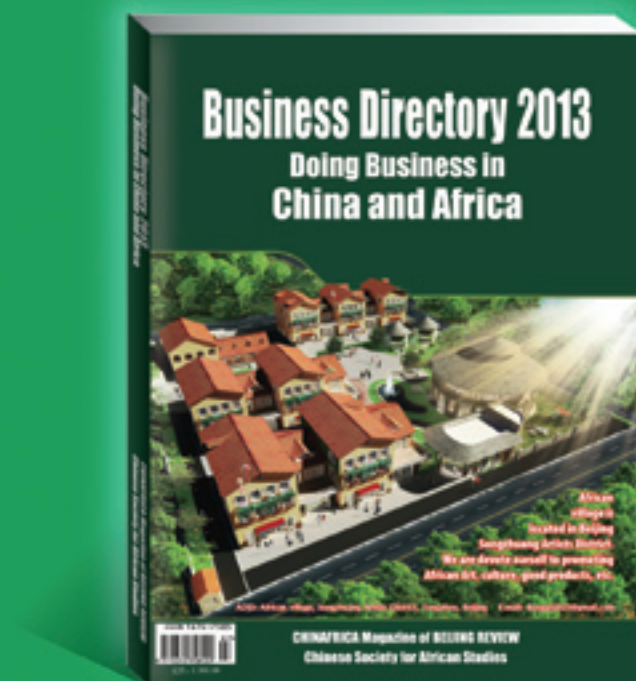
*Zhu Rongji on the Record* is a compilation of Zhu's writings. It covers China's reform, opening up and modernization drive. It includes important speeches, articles, letters, and directives. Zhu Rongji is a key Chinese reformer and statesman, and served as Vice Premier of the State Council from April 1991 to March 1998. He later served as Premier, from March 1998 to March 2003. Most of the materials in the book are being published for the first time. The Chinese edition of the book was published in Chinese mainland in 2011, and was very well received. The two-volume English edition includes 112 speeches, articles, letters, and directives selected by Zhu himself from the 348 articles in the four-volume Chinese edition. The English edition of the book is published by the Foreign Languages Press of the CIPG and the Brookings Institution Press in the U.S. Both Henry A. Kissinger, former U.S. secretary of state and Helmut Schmidt, former chancellor of West Germany wrote prefaces.

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COVER STORY

# DECIDING ON A SECOND CHILD

More and more regions have relaxed their family planning policies and are allowing some couples to have more offspring **By Wang Hairong**

**A** middle-aged couple residing in China's southern Guangdong Province have recently found themselves facing a dilemma: whether or not to have a second child.

Li Jun is the only child in his family, while his wife Zhang Li has a sister. Their daughter was born in 2006. Due to the recent relaxation of China's family planning policy, the couple is now eligible to have a second child.

Last December, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, decided to ease the country's decades-long family planning policy and allow couples to have two children if either parent is an only child, in a bid to raise fertility rates and ease the financial burden on China's rapidly aging population. But the change will take effect in provincial-level regions only after local legislatures revise their family planning regulations. On March 27, Guangdong revised its regulations.

Considering his own lonely childhood, Li is eager to have another child so that his daughter will have company. But Zhang does not see eye

to eye with her husband on this issue. Thinking of the troubles she underwent while conceiving and raising their first child, she is hesitant.

"I am already 38. Although I can still give birth, but I am not as energetic as I was in my 20s or early 30s," she told the Guangzhou-based *Yangcheng Evening News*.

Zhang, a mid-level manager in a company, said that she often has to work extra hours, and if she has another child, she might have to quit her job.

Furthermore, their only daughter has left them with little spare time, she said. Now, their daughter is in the first grade of primary school. They tutor her in the evenings and accompany her to extracurricular activities on the weekends.

Moreover, both her and her husband's parents are in their 70s, and no longer capable of caring for another baby, Zhang said.

## No explosive growth

Whether or not to have a second child is a question many couples of child-bearing age in China are wrestling with after the family planning



policy amendment was adopted.

The birth control relaxation was first implemented in east China's Zhejiang Province on January 17. By the end of April, 22 provincial-level regions on China's mainland had officially launched the new policy. Most of the remaining provinces and autonomous regions plan to implement the policy later this year, according to China News Service.

In regions such as Beijing, Tianjin, Chongqing, as well as Sichuan and Heilongjiang provinces, after the birth of their first baby, a couple is required to wait for three to four years before having a second one, unless the mother is above a certain age limit, usually 28 years old.

At most 60 percent of eligible couples born in the 1980s will choose to raise a second child, said Wang Guangzhou, a researcher with the Institute of Population and Labor Economics



**SUPER DADDY:** More than 100 fathers and their babies attend a training activity in an early education center in Beijing

under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, citing recent surveys.

As to whether the birth control relaxation will create a population explosion, Ma Xu, the lead researcher of the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC), estimated that every year, a maximum of 2 million more babies than normal would be born across the country.

Chen Yiping, Deputy Director of the Guangdong Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission, said that fewer than 150,000 families in the province are eligible to have a second child as a result of the policy change, and a survey showed that only about 70 percent of them are willing to have another baby. Despite this, Chen said that the policy change will make little difference to the population of Guangdong.

Guangdong, with a permanent population of 104.3 million, was the most populous province in China, according to the sixth national census conducted in 2010.

Nationwide, the policy will affect 15 million to 20 million eligible couples who are at child-bearing age and have already had their first child, said Zhai Zhenwu, a sociology professor with the Beijing-based Renmin University of China and Vice President of the China Population Association. The new policy will mainly affect urban couples of child-bearing age, he added.

The number of eligible families has not increased drastically because there were already a number of exceptions to the family planning policy in place. For instance, rural couples can have a second child if their first child is a girl or is handicapped. Families in which neither parent

has siblings are also allowed to have two children, and so are most ethnic minority couples.

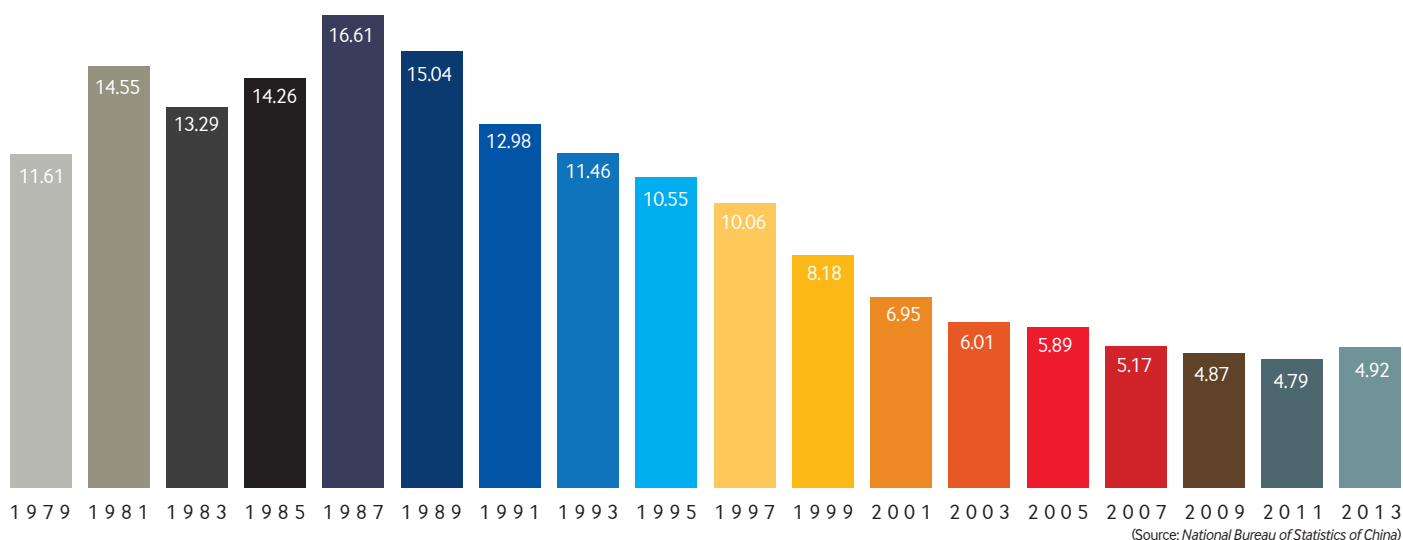
Some families, like that of famous film director Zhang Yimou, have already chosen to pay fines and give birth to more children.

Moreover, some families chose not to have a second child even if they are eligible.

Because of the high cost of raising and educating children, many young couples will not grasp the opportunity without consideration, said Yin Zhigang, a professor at the Beijing School of Governance.

Eligible couples in large cities will be less willing to have second child than those in small and medium-sized cities, Zhai said. He noted that in the next four to five years, a small rise in the birth rate will appear, but the overall fertility rate is unlikely to exceed 2 per thousand. According to him, the fertility rate will begin to fall later and ►►

## Natural Population Growth in China (%)



### Policy Change

China introduced the family planning policy in the 1970s to curb population growth.

In the 1950s and 60s, China's population exploded due to a rapid drop in mortality rate and a higher birth rate, according to Zhai Zhenwu, a sociology professor at the Beijing-based Renmin University of China and Vice President of the China Population Association.

In the 1960s, China's population was around 600 million, and it grew at an annual net rate of 2.5 percent on average, Zhai said.

Since the early 1980s, most urban couples had been allowed to have only one child while most rural couples were allowed to have two if their firstborn was a girl. In late 2011, couples across the country were given the option of having two children if both of the parents

are themselves from one-child families. Last December, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress decided to further relax birth control measures by allowing families to have a second child so long as at least one of the parents is an only child.

The country's total fertility rate dropped to below the level necessary to keep the population stable in the early 1990s and currently stands at 1.5 to 1.6 per thousand, which is comparable to the average level in developed countries, said Wang Peian, Vice Minister of the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

In the meantime, the demographic structure of the country has also changed, and some problems have surfaced.

China's working-age population has already begun to drop. The year 2012 saw a decrease

of 2.45 million working age people from the previous year, and after 2023, this group will dwindle by 8 million annually, according to Wang.

Furthermore, the population is quickly aging. In 2013, China had 200 million citizens aged 60 and over, accounting for one seventh of the total population, while by the mid-2030s, the number is expected to reach 400 million, accounting for one quarter of the total population, Wang revealed.

Wang said that recent adjustment to the family planning policy is conducive to maintaining an adequate working-age population, slowing down the aging of the population, and improving families' abilities to resist risk and to provide for the elderly. The policy adjustment will promote long-term balanced population development, he concluded.

remain low for some period.

Although the number of births will increase in the next few years after the implementation of the new policy, it will be close to the number of births around the year 2000, said Wang Peian, Vice Minister of the NHFPC.

According to Wang Peian, official estimations suggest that the total population in 2020 will be substantially lower than 1.43 billion and the population will peak at a figure below 1.5 billion. He said that he is confident that the re-

laxation of birth control will neither put pressure on China's food security nor on public services like healthcare, education and employment.

Nonetheless, Wang Peian said that family planning, as a basic national policy, shall be maintained on a long-term basis and those who violate the relevant laws and regulations will be punished.

A two-child policy for all couples would be impossible at this time because of the fluctuations in the number of births it would cause and

the resulting pressure on public services, Wang Peian added.

### Coping with change

After the implementation of the new policy, education and public health organizations are trying to deal with its expected impacts.

"The size of the population directly affects the size of education institutions at various stages and the resources they need, espe-

cially kindergartens,” said Hua Aihua, Dean of the Pre-School Education Department of East China Normal University in Shanghai.

Even before the implementation of the new policy, kindergartens and obstetrical and pediatric departments of hospitals, particularly those in large cities, are already suffering from shortages. Now, people worry that a possible mini-baby boom will exacerbate the situation.

Because of the influx of migrants, Beijing’s kindergartens, primary and middle schools have always been in short supply, an unnamed official of Beijing Municipal Commission of Education told *China Education News*.

In Zhejiang, education resources are also strained. “Our schools are already full. To ensure children’s access to education, we can only enlarge the class size,” said Jiang Feng, an official with the Education Bureau of Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang.

Jiang estimated that under the relaxed family planning policy, primary school enrollment will grow by approximately 10 percent. He worried that larger class sizes might lead to poorer education quality.

Meng Fanhua, Vice President of the Beijing-based Capital Normal University, believes that there is still time for educational institutions to adjust for the upcoming increase in enrollment. He said that since babies born this year will enter kindergartens three years later and primary schools six years later, concerned government departments and education institutions should take planned actions to increase supplies to meet the growing demand.



**ELIGIBLE COUPLE:** He Shaodong and wife Zhou Jun, residents in Hefei City, Anhui Province, show their permit that allows the couple to have a second child, on February 14. Zhou is the only child in her family

The Shanghai Municipal Commission of Education said that it plans to continue to expand existing kindergartens, primary and middle schools and build new ones to meet the expected enrollment surge.

According to the commission’s projection, at the end of 2015, the city will have about 540,000 children who need pre-school education and about 870,000 children reaching school age, while the enrollment capacity of the city’s kindergartens and primary schools will be 538,800 and 874,000, respectively.

The public health system is also making preparations. After the adjustment of the family planning policy, demand for obstetrical and pediatric services will increase significantly, especially in large cities, said NHFPC Vice Minister Wang Guoqiang at a national meeting on women and children’s health held on April 17.

Wang Guoqiang said that approximately 80 percent of the 2 million additional newborns will be in cities, particularly large and medium-sized ones, which will add pressure to urban medical institutions.

Yue Hongni, Vice President of the Huaian City Maternal and Child Health Hospital in Jiangsu Province, already feels the pressure. She said that obstetrical and pediatric departments experience higher instances of doctor-patient disputes and medical accidents, so many doctors are reluctant to work there, and current medical resources in these departments cannot meet the increasing demand.

For instance, Huainan needs about 2,400 hospital beds for children, yet the city currently has only 933 such beds, Yue said.

Many women eligible for a second child are already at advanced maternal age, and face a higher risk of childbirth complications and their children face a higher risk of birth defects, Wang Guoqiang said.

He said that local governments should increase the capacity of maternal and child health services, and improve service quality. ■



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