**两孩政策生效以来中国出生人口首次下降**

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The annual number of births in China has fallen for the first time since Beijing relaxed its one-child policy, suggesting that the reform has failed to reverse declining fertility rates that economists warn are a long-term threat to the country’s development.

中国的年度出生人数出现自政府放宽独生子女政策以来的首次下降，似乎表明这一改革未能扭转生育率的下降。经济学家们警告称，这对中国的发展是一个长期威胁。

There were 17.23m births in China in 2017, down from 17.86m the previous year, the country’s national statistics bureau said on Thursday.

中国国家统计局周四表示，2017年中国出生人口1723万人，比上年的1786万人有所下降。

The ruling Communist party’s policy allowing all couples to have two children came into force in 2016, leading to a 1.3m increase in births that year compared with 2015.

执政的共产党允许所有夫妇生育两个孩子的政策在2016年生效，导致该年出生人数比2015年增加130万人。

Analysts said that the rise in births in 2016 was probably a one-off as couples who had been waiting to have a second child did so as soon as the policy changed.

分析人士称，2016年出生人数的上升很可能是一次性的，因为等待生育第二胎的夫妇在政策改变后马上利用了该政策。

“Some people took advantage of the lifting of the ban but most Chinese, even in rural areas, are concerned about how to pay for education?.?.?.?Its very hard to encourage people to have more children,” said Martin Whyte, a professor of sociology at Harvard University.

“有一部分人利用了禁令解除，但大多数中国人——甚至在农村也是如此——都担心如何支付教育费用……很难鼓励人们生更多孩子，”哈佛大学(Harvard University)社会学教授怀默霆(Martin King Whyte)表示。

Economists have warned that falling birth rates in China are leading to a rapid ageing of the population and creating a shortage of workers. That is placing a greater burden on social services even while per capita incomes in the country lag behind developed nations, which have struggled with declining fertility rates for decades.

经济学家们警告称，中国的出生率下降正在导致人口迅速老龄化和劳动力短缺。这给社会服务带来了更大的负担，而与此同时中国的人均收入仍低于发达国家水平，后者竭力应对生育率下降已有几十年之久。

“China is experiencing problems that mostly more developed countries have experienced for a long time,” added Mr Whyte.

“中国正在经历以更发达国家为主的其他一些国家早就遇到的问题，”怀默霆补充说。

By about the middle of this century, one in every three Chinese people is forecast to be aged more than 60. Beijing expects the country’s population to peak in about 2030 at 1.4bn, before going into a gradual decline.

到本世纪中叶前后，预计中国三分之一的人口年龄将在60岁以上。北京方面预计，中国人口将在2030年左右达到14亿的顶峰，然后逐年下降。

Analysts say shifts in attitudes, such as a greater emphasis on investing in children’s education, are lowering the country’s fertility rate. Some demographers say that these trends were evident even before the one-child policy was introduced in 1979, meaning the demographic shift would have happened regardless.

分析人士表示，态度的转变，比如更加重视投资于孩子的教育，正在降低中国的生育率。一些人口结构专家称，这些趋势即使在1979年实行独生子女政策之前就显而易见，这意味着人口结构的变化无论如何都会发生。

Stuart Gietel-Basten, a demography expert at the University of Oxford, said: “Starting a family and having children in China is really hard work?.?.?.?Age at marriage is creeping up finally, which will also depress fertility rates.”

牛津大学(University of Oxford)的人口结构问题专家斯图尔特?吉特尔-巴斯滕(Stuart Gietel-Basten)表示：“成家和生孩子在中国是非常艰辛的事情……结婚年龄终于逐渐推迟了，这也会压低生育率。”

To counter the falling birth rate, some Chinese commentators are advocating tax breaks and subsidies to encourage couples to have more children.

为了应对出生率下降，中国一些评论人士呼吁出台减税和补贴措施，以鼓励夫妻生育更多孩子。



The introduction of the two-child policy affected China’s urban residents more than those in rural areas, mainly because the policy was not enforced as stringently outside the cities.

实行两孩政策对中国城市居民的影响要大于对农村居民的影响，主要原因是当初独生子女政策在城市以外的执行力度较低。

But Chinese city dwellers tend to have a preference for fewer children, partly because they perceive the costs of raising a child as prohibitive and because women in cities are more educated. “The change disproportionately affected urban couples who have lower fertility preference anyway,” added Mr Gietel-Basten.

但中国城市居民倾向于少生，部分原因是他们认为抚养孩子的成本太高，而且城市里的女性受教育程度较高。“政策变化对城市夫妇的影响超出比例，而这些人无论如何都喜欢少生，”吉特尔-巴斯滕补充道。