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China may see negative population growth after 2020

By Chan Lu
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The fifth plenary session of the 18th Communist Party Central Committee is currently taking place and will result in the 13th Five-Year Plan. According to the original 12th Five-Year Plan, the aggregate population in China by the year of 2015 should reach 1.39 billion, with a natural growth rate of 7.2%.

However, statistics by the year of 2014 showed that the total population only reached 1.367 billion with 5.21% natural growth rate. Based on this trend, the country's population by 2015 would only be around 1.374 billion, a fifteen million deficit of that was planned.

"The main reasons underlying the decreased natural population growth rate are the raised mortality rate and plateaued fertility desires", said Li Jianmin, head of the Institute of Population and Development of Nankai University.

Li pointed out that according to the current situation, the total population should be around 1.4 billion after the 13th five-year plan by 2020, definitely lower than the originally planned 1.45 billion. Therefore, the imminent goal, including its annual growth rate objectives, must be downgraded.

Researcher Zhang Yi of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences believes that with increased levels of economic and social development comes reduced fertility rate. Thus, the 13th five-year plan should further relax on the policy of population control.

"The result of the current two-child policy yields a less than optimum number of applicants and production, so the original plan may be outdated and is subject to further modifications", says Zhang.

Zhang further adds that the direction of the changes in population policy should focus less on the restriction of growth, and more towards family support for those in need.

China applies a five-year period as a unit to mark the country's short-term planning in terms of its national, economic, and social development. The first five-year plan started from 1953 to 1957.