

Gentler reminders to replace ugliness

China has launched a program to replace harsh slogans, which sometimes even threaten criminal acts, that some officials use to promote the country's one-child policy.

Instead it wants to substitute with milder expressions in an effort to "avoid offending the public and stoking social tensions."

The program, named "face-washing project," initiated by the National Population and Family Planning Commission, aims to phase out those eye-sore slogans involving violent threats and replace them with "friendly" expressions, the People's Daily reported yesterday.

Some local officials in rural areas have come up with nasty slogans to intimidate couples planning to have more than one child. Simply reading some of them can send chills down one's spine.

Some examples: "If you don't receive the tubal ligation surgery by the deadline, your house will be demolished!" "We would rather scrape your womb than allow you to have a second child!" "Kill all your family members if you don't follow the rule!"

"Once you get captured, an immediate tubal ligation will be done; Should you escape, we'll hunt you down; If you attempt a suicide, we'll offer you either the rope or a bottle of poison."

The Chinese government adopted the family-planning policy in the late 1970s to rein in the growth rate of the world's largest population. It officially restricts most couples in urban areas to one child. Those who violate the regulation may face a huge fine.

"Overpopulation remains one of the major challenges to social and economic development," said Li Bin, director of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, according to Xinhua news agency.

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To avoid triggering widespread aversion, China has moved to replace these old-fashioned slogans with ones focusing on the population-related challenges, including gender imbalance, aging populace and unhealthy births, the People's Daily said.

For every 100 girls born in 2010, 118 boys were born, Li said. It is estimated that around 30 million to 40 million adult men will have a hard time finding wives by 2020.

So the nation promotes: "Caring for the girl means caring for the future of the nation."

Currently, 13.26 percent of China's population is aged 60 or above. The percentage is expected to hit one-third, or 440 million people, by 2050, according to Li.

To address this, the new slogan goes: "Old people from the one-child families can get the allowances after they are 60 years old," according to the People's Daily.

To avoid the births of defective babies, the nation says: "Please cure your illness before you plan to be a mother. Please get rid of the alcohol and cigarettes before you plan to be a father."

Though the slogans change, China will still adhere to its family policy, Li said.

China's new policy allows couples who themselves are both only children to have a second child. But for other couples, they are still allowed to have only one child.

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