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Gang busted for illegal gender selection testing

By SHAN JUAN
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China has broken up a gang that was providing illegal sex-determination tests, largely for gender selection, the top health authority announced on Sunday.

The gang tested more than 1,000 women around China in 2013, said the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

One of the main suspects, identified as Wang Ermin, has been convicted and sentenced to three and a half years in prison, according to the commission.

The gang started offering the illegal tests in 2010, first in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, and soon expanded into most parts of the country.

They were exposed after a woman named Wu died of amniotic fluid embolism after a test organized by the ring in late 2012.

The method used — amniotic fluid extraction — is more accurate than an ultrasound, but involves far more risk, a medical expert said.

According to Wu's husband, they traveled from Yiwu to Zhengzhou, Henan province, for the procedure, which cost around 2,000 yuan (\$330).

The couple, who already had

a 2-year-old girl, were desperate to have a boy who would bring more economic benefit to the rural family during a compensation program.

Breaking up the gang "was a major achievement under the one-year campaign launched last October by government agencies including the commission and the Ministry of Public Security", the commission said.

In China, sex determination testing, gender-selective procedures and abortions for non-medical purposes are prohibited, particularly given a traditional preference for boys over girls and a largely skewed sex ratio, which stands at 115 boys born for every 100 girls.

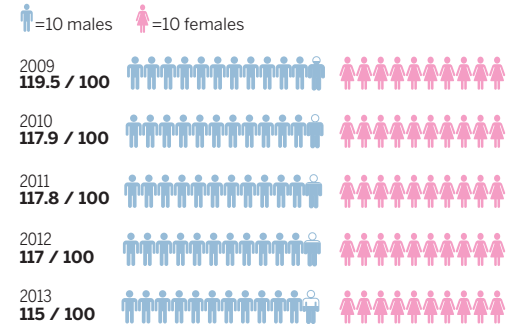
Internationally, a normal range should be between 103 and 107. "Sex-selective abortions after sex determinations have further fuelled an imbalance," said Lu Jiehua, a sociology professor at Peking University.

Zhai Zhenwu, a professor at the School of Sociology and Population Studies at Renmin University of China, agreed, adding that an increasing access to ultrasounds since the late 1980s has made sex selection far easier and has partially led to an imbalance in the sex ratio at birth.

SEE "SEX RATIO" PAGE 3

SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

(Number of boys / Number of girls)



Source: National Health and Family Planning Commission FENG XIUXIA / CHINA DAILY



Premier Li Keqiang greets badminton Olympic and world champion Lin Dan, as writer Feng Jikai looks on, during a forum in Beijing on Friday. Ten representatives shared their views on the government's work in 2013 and made suggestions to improve the Government Work Report.

Li pledges to help startups

Government seeks opinions from representatives on its work report

By ZHAO YINAN and HEDAN

Premier Li Keqiang pledged more policies to facilitate start-up businesses, a move that would promote innovation and ease job-hunting worries of college graduates.

The premier promised better support from the government for student entrepreneurs facing difficult job-hunting prospects, and he said their perseverance will lead to larger possibilities of success when building up businesses.

Li made the pledge at a forum on Friday, where the government sought opin-

ions from representatives in science, education, culture, medicine and sports as well as from migrant workers and young business owners.

Nearly 7.3 million graduates of Chinese colleges will enter the job market in June, not to mention those returning from overseas study. The number will be 280,000 more than 2013, which was considered the hardest year to find a job by some analysts, due to the global economic downturn.

After hearing opinions from Han Lei, a university student and an entrepreneur who operates a filmmaking workshop in Beijing, Li said the govern-

ment will formulate a program to support business startups by university graduates.

Han told Li that it is still difficult for him to apply for tax exemption and other government support.

"Sometimes the procedures are too complicated for an outsider who knows little about the issue, while sometimes we don't even know that there is a favorable policy designed for us," he said. "Better communication between entrepreneurs and government agencies is needed."

However, Lyu Xuejing, a social security expert at Capital University of Economics and Business, warned that despite examples of success, starting a business is not the best way out for those students who are not prepared for the difficulties.

A student who decides to start up a business should be equipped with the requisite knowledge, better capabilities, more ideas and adequate capital, she said.

"Only a small number of graduates are qualified to start their own business. The government should speed up economic restructuring to create more job opportunities that are suitable for a college graduate," she said.

Although the content of the report will not be released until the annual session of the National People's Congress in March, Li said science, education, culture, health and sports will be given more emphasis in the report than in previous years.

"The purpose of the coun-

try's development is to serve the people's material and cultural demands. Without progress in science, education, culture, health and sports, our development will not be a comprehensive one, and is unsustainable," he said.

In response to words from a farmer from Hunan province and a migrant worker from Jiangsu province, Li said the government will pay attention to solving their difficulties, and the representatives' comments will be taken into account in improving the State Council's annual Government Work Report.

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Li Xiang contributed to this story.

Two sessions shun extravagance and empty formality

Lawmakers seek frugal meetings, report Zhou Wenting in Shanghai, Qi Xin in Zhengzhou, Zhao Kai in Guiyang and Cao Yin in Beijing.

As Li Xinxin, a member of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, waited for a shuttle bus on Saturday morning, he looked on his tablet computer to check the timetable for vehicles that pick up delegates.

"It's the first time the organizers have sent out electronic versions of the meeting agenda, schedules and other reference materials instead of printouts. This will help to make the ses-

sions greener," said Li, a member of Shanghai's top political advisory body for seven years.

This was the second year organizers arranged for shuttle buses to carry the 1,600-some deputies and members along the venues for the second plenary session of the municipality's 12th CPPCC and the second session of the 14th Shanghai People's Congress, the local legislative body.

Widely known as the "two sessions", the meetings are the most important annual event on China's political calendar at the local and central levels.

SEE "TWO SESSIONS" PAGE 6



Li Na advances: Chinese tennis star Li Na signs autographs after winning her women's singles match against Ekaterina Makarova of Russia to reach the quarterfinals at the Australian Open 2014 tennis tournament in Melbourne on Sunday. > p24

IN THE NEWS

NATION Letter from Xi

President Xi Jinping writes a letter to all Chinese students in Germany, asking them to study hard and contribute to their homeland and compatriots in the future. > p3

Newcomer

China Operating System, an operating system developed by Chinese scientists, will go after market share from competitors Google and Apple. > p4

WORLD Obama: US will spy

The US intelligence community will continue to spy on foreign governments, President Barack Obama said in an interview broadcast on Saturday. > p11

Constitution OK'd

Egyptian voters approve a new Constitution in what the government declared a popular endorsement of the army's overthrow of Islamist president Mohammed Morsi. > p10



BUSINESS Future potential

A new book on China's position in the world this century offers a nuanced picture of its strengths and weaknesses. > p13

Date with destiny

A student from Guinea-Bissau becomes the first African to appear on China's most popular TV dating show. > p13

SPORTS 100-goal mark

Manchester City steamed through the 100 barrier as goals continued to rain down at Etihad Stadium in a 4-2 Premier League win over Cardiff City on Saturday. > p23

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