

Scholars come to China so they can research Tibet

More overseas scholars now seek to come to China to study Tibetan history and culture, a senior researcher said on Thursday.

These people have received higher education in their home countries, but lack on-site studies in the Tibet autonomous region and traditional Tibetology research, said Zheng Dui, secretary-general of the China Tibetology Research Center, China's top academic research institute on the topic.

At a news conference, Zheng made the remarks in response to questions from overseas reporters on whether monasteries and schools built by the Dalai Lama's followers in India would attract more Tibetan people from China to accept education there.

"I'm not worried at all, because the roots of traditional Tibetan culture is in China," he said.

Zheng said there are 6 million Tibetan people in China, comprising the vast majority of the ethnic group around the world, so "the mainstream of Tibetology is thus right here".

The center estimates about 150,000 Tibetan people live in South Asia.

"On the contrary, we've noticed that more Tibetan scholars living overseas now begin to seek opportunities studying Tibetan history and culture back in China," Zheng said.

"It's not a question how the mainstream adapts to tributaries, but how tributaries get merged into the mainstream."

Nevertheless, Zheng said more communication between Tibetology institutes in China and their overseas counterparts is crucial to develop more fruitful academic results and train experts in other countries.

For instance, starting from joint efforts with Austrian Academy of Sciences in 2004 on studies of ancient Tibetan Buddhism manuscripts in Sanskrit, cooperation with Zheng's institute has expanded to more countries' including the United States, Italy and Japan.

Founded in 1986, China Tibetology Research Center has nearly 200 scholars covering history, economy, traditional medicine and many more fields. There are more than 50 research institutes focused on Tibetology in China.

Zheng said some large-scale Tibetological projects can only be done by China. For example, the editing of The General History of Tibet, which includes 9 million characters in eight volumes, was completed in 2015 after 18 years of work, which he said clarified some misleading theories on Tibet's history.

And, the ongoing editing of the Tibetan language volume of Zhonghua Dadian (Chinese Encyclopedia) is estimated to include more than 1,000 types of ancient books in Tibetan. The estimated 15-year project began in 2013.

[Surrogacy standoff sees more couples heading abroad](#)

Since China implemented the universal second-child policy at the beginning of last year, more than half of the 90 million newly eligible couples include women age 35 or older, according to the National Health and Family Planning Commission.

Geng Linlin, deputy director of the clinical center at the commission's scientific research institute, said many of these women are past prime fertility so they find it difficult to have a second baby.

Fertility declines as women age, according to Geng, who added that nearly 90 percent of women age 45 and older are unable to conceive or carry a pregnancy to full term. Moreover, women age 35 and older stand a greater risk of miscarriage.

Other factors, such as environmental pollution, the widespread use of chemicals and exposure to electromagnetic radiation, can also affect people's ability to reproduce.

The World Health Organization estimates that 15 to 20 percent of the global population is infertile, which translates to about 15 million couples in China.

"Declining human fertility has become a social problem," said Wang Lina, a veteran fertility specialist at the Peking University Third Hospital in Beijing.

She pointed to altruistic surrogacy—where the surrogate mother receives no financial reward—as a new option, particularly for women who are unable to become pregnant because of physical limitations but still long to have a second child.

At present, the only regulation governing surrogacy was issued by the commission, the nation's top health authority, in 2001. It prohibits medical facilities and professionals from performing any form of surrogacy.

Since then, the government has repeatedly launched raids on underground clinics across the country, but the "womb business" has never ceased completely.

However, largely as a result of the government ban, a rising number of well-to-do Chinese have begun to seek surrogacy services in countries where the procedure is legal and is performed under the correct conditions.

Failed attempt

Liu Li has a deformed uterus, which prevents her from becoming pregnant naturally or safely carrying a baby to term, but she still produces eggs.

The 39-year-old Shanghai native decided to seek treatment in the United States after an attempt at underground surrogacy failed. Almost three years ago, Liu found a surrogate via an agency in the municipality, but the woman disappeared after the embryo had been implanted.

"I spent a large sum, but I didn't get my baby," Liu said, declining to give details of the amount she paid. She didn't report the incident to the police because "surrogacy is illegal, and I didn't want other people to know".

Inspired by ads she saw at the fertility clinic she had attended, Liu turned her eyes to California, where surrogacy is legal, and approached an agency in China.

In August 2015, she first met with her surrogate, Amanda, a young white woman, in a fertility clinic in the US state.

Amanda had already undergone a series of health checks and psychological tests to ensure that she would make a suitable surrogate, according to Liu: "I liked her at first sight, so we signed the surrogacy contract quickly."

Having supplied the egg and her husband's sperm, Liu welcomed her baby daughter in June. As she and her husband are the child's biological parents, the baby's features are undeniably Chinese.

The entire procedure cost about \$150,000. "It would have been cheaper and easier for us if surrogacy were allowed in China," she said.

Wang, from the Peking University Third Hospital, suggested the government should ease the ban to help women such as Liu to have a child.

Volunteer surrogacy is allowed in many countries, and commercial surrogacy is also available, especially in some US states.

"China should follow suit. But purely commercial programs must be strictly prohibited," said Wang, who has treated many young women who have had their ovaries removed because of diseases such as cancer.

"They are so young and shouldn't miss the chance of having their own child. Surrogacy can help them fulfill their dreams of motherhood," she said.

According to Wang Yifang, a professor at Peking University's institute for medical humanities, legitimate surrogacy could also help couples who have lost their only child as a result of accident or illness, but the wife is now too old to conceive naturally or carry a pregnancy to term.

“Ethical concerns should not undermine reasonable application of this helpful medical procedure,” he said.

Caution advised

However, Xue Jun, a professor of law at Peking University, advised caution, noting that there are many concerns surrounding surrogacy, including gender selection and the potential for legal disputes between surrogates and the intended parents.

Liu Ye, a lawyer in Shanghai, is strongly opposed to surrogacy. He cited potential health hazards facing surrogates, such as hypertension, uterine discomfort, abnormal fetal position, pain during delivery and even death.

Also, “poor women may be used as reproductive tools by the rich”, he added.

In response, Wang Lina stressed that only altruistic, unpaid surrogacy should be legalized, and the procedure should be performed for women with clearly defined existing conditions, such as uterine problems, or who have failed with other fertility treatments.

In gestational surrogacy, the intended parents use in vitro fertilization to produce an embryo that is genetically theirs and then have it transferred to the uterus of the surrogate. However, the likelihood of pregnancy varies widely because of the high average age of the donors.

In other cases, the surrogate also donates the egg. That was the case for Geng Le, CEO of the gay social-networking app Blued which has more than 21 million registered users in China.

Geng’s baby boy was born in San Francisco a few weeks ago via a Western surrogate.

“Both commercial surrogacy and egg donation is legal here (San Francisco). I chose a white surrogate so I could have a mixed-blood baby—they are usually prettier and smarter,” he said.

Surrogacy is the only way for gay men across the world to have a baby, but Geng said that even excluding the policy restrictions, affordability is a major concern.

A gay man in Chongqing, who declined to be named, said he would prefer to visit clinics in the US or Europe, but the “complicated procedures and high cost deterred me from the idea of ‘surrogacy tourism’”. He didn’t think China would legalize surrogacy anytime soon.

In a potentially tricky development, the final amended Law on Population and Family Planning, which took effect on Jan 1 last year, didn’t outlaw surrogacy. That omission, which means acting as a surrogate is not a crime in China, has led some commentators to claim the move demonstrates a cautious and prudent approach to the procedure.

However, in February, Mao Qun’an, a spokesman for the National Health and

Family Planning Commission, reiterated that surrogacy remains a complicated issue in relation to the law and medical ethics.

“The commission will continue to crack down on such practices,” he said.

Fact box

Surrogacy is an arrangement in which a woman carries and delivers a baby for someone else. The woman who carries the baby is the surrogate. The parents-to-be are known as the intended parents. They are involved in the pregnancy, are present at the birth and become the child’s (legal) parents after the baby is born.

Methods

□ Traditional surrogacy: the surrogate serves as both the egg donor and the surrogate for the embryo. She is impregnated using a procedure known as intrauterine insemination. The surrogate is also the child’s biological mother.

□ Gestational surrogacy: the surrogate’s eggs are not used, meaning the child is not biologically related to her. The embryo is created via in vitro fertilization by using sperm from the biological father and an egg provided by the biological mother. Once the embryo has been implanted in the surrogate’s uterus, she will carry it until birth.

Legal status of surrogacy worldwide

□ Countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria and China prohibit all forms of surrogacy.

□ In countries such as the United Kingdom, Denmark and Belgium, surrogacy is allowed if the surrogate mother is not paid or is only paid reasonable living expenses. Commercial surrogacy is illegal.

□ Surrogacy is fully legal in some US states, and in countries such as India, Russia and Ukraine.

Source: The World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

California becomes favored center

The number of Chinese seeking surrogacy services at the Southern California Reproductive Center in Los Angeles has risen gradually in recent years, according to Mark Surrey, the center’s chief medical officer.

Last year, more than 100 Chinese clients opted for the center’s surrogacy services, accounting for about 50 percent of all Chinese who used the facility, Surrey told China Daily in an email exchange.

As a result of physical factors, the average age of clients for surrogacy services is 40, he wrote. In addition, about 50 percent of Chinese people

undergoing the treatment were trying to have a second child.

Usually, the process usually takes about two months, from egg retrieval to the transfer and embedding of the embryo. Patients pay \$30,000 to \$35,000 for the procedure, excluding the fee paid to the surrogate mother.

Surrey said the center wouldn't be affected if the Chinese authorities decided to legalize surrogacy: "We have patients from all over the world. Our business is not only about surrogacy services. It will be beneficial to many patients if China legalizes surrogacy services in the future and the SCRC will always wish all the best for all patients."

In addition to surrogacy, the center provides services such as in vitro fertilization, egg freezing and the preservation of embryos.

DPRK's latest ballistic missile and engine test raises risk of regional arms race – UN Security Council

23 March 2017 – The United Nations Security Council today strongly condemned the ballistic missile launch and a ballistic missile engine test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) this week in flagrant and provocative defiance of a number of Council resolutions expressly forbidding such activities.

"The launch and engine test are in grave violation of DPRK's international obligations under [numerous] UN Security Council resolutions," said the 15-member Security Council in a statement today.

"The members of the Security Council reiterated that DPRK refrain from further actions, including nuclear tests [...] and comply fully with its obligations under these resolutions," the statement added.

They also deplored all ballistic missile activities, including the most recent launch (on 21 March) and the engine test (on 19 March) and noted that such activities contribute to the country's development of nuclear weapons delivery systems and increase tension in the region and beyond as well as the risk of a regional arms race.

They further regretted that the country is diverting resources to the pursuit of such activities while its citizens have great unmet needs.

Also in the statement, the Council called upon all UN Member States to

redouble their efforts to implement fully the measures imposed on the DPRK by the Council, and directed the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) to intensify its work to strengthen enforcement of relevant resolutions and assist Member States to comply with their obligations under those and other resolutions.

Further, reiterating the importance of maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in North-East Asia at large, Council members expressed their commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation and welcomed efforts by Council members, as well as other Member States, to facilitate a peaceful and comprehensive solution through dialogue.

They also emphasised the vital importance that DPRK shows “sincere commitment” to denuclearization.

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International, independent probe of alleged violations in Yemen needed – UN deputy rights chief

23 March 2017 – Describing the situation in Yemen as one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises – ‘and one that is entirely man-made’ – the United Nations human rights deputy chief today urged the national commission of inquiry to fulfill its mandate of investigating all alleged violations of international and Yemeni laws.

“We encourage the Yemeni National Commission to make progress on all aspects of its mandate to investigate all allegations of violations of international law and Yemeni law, including those that go beyond the extent of the Commission’s cooperation with OHCHR [the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights],” UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kate Gilmore told a UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva yesterday.

She said that OHCHR has re-established its engagement with the National Commission on a programme of joint activities and a list of thematic priorities. The first of these activities took place from 21 to 23 February, in Doha, Qatar, which was a capacity-building workshop on international

humanitarian law, investigative methodologies and lessons learnt from UN commissions of inquiry.

The de facto authorities in the capital, Sana'a, have officially communicated their intention not to extend cooperation to the National Commission or to any OHCHR team tasked with implementing the Human Rights Council resolution.

In response, OHCHR has urged the authorities to reconsider that decision and called on all parties to follow through on their commitment to cooperate with the National Commission and OHCHR.

She said that calls for an international and independent commission of investigation have been dismissed by some as potentially undermining the National Commission.

However, there are no persuasive reasons to believe that an international and independent investigation could not operate alongside a national commission of inquiry as the existence of one does not exclude the other, she explained.

The National Commission's first publications failed to comply with internationally recognized standards of methodology and impartiality, she pointed out.

Still, Ms. Gilmore argued that the violations allegedly committed in the ongoing conflict are of such gravity that impunity simply cannot be accepted. In the absence of credible mechanisms for national remedy, international and independent alternatives are essential.

"The High Commissioner has no choice but to reiterate his call for an international and independent commission of inquiry into all allegations of violations of human rights and humanitarian law, regardless of the alleged perpetrators," she said.

Such an approach would also support the efforts of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Yemen to reach a negotiated and durable settlement of the conflict, she added.