

Birth defects jump in China

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China experienced a 40 percent jump in babies born with "visible deformities" from 2001 to 2006, with the number now reaching up to 300,000 annually.

In a report presented at a recent conference, Jiang Fan of the National Population and Family Planning Commission said the rate of such defects among all Chinese infants rose from 104.9 per 10,000 births in 2001 to 145.5 in 2006, the China Daily reported Tuesday.

Jiang also said of the 20 million babies born in China every year, 800,000 to 1.2 million of them, or as many as 6 percent, are born with a defect of some kind or other.

The reasons cited for the increase ranged from geographic, environmental and economic factors to endemic diseases and level of education. Rural and poverty-stricken communities were found to be more susceptible to the growing problem.

"A baby with defects is born every 30 seconds in China, and this situation has worsened year by year," he said.

The report said only up to 30 percent of these infants can be cured or treated, while 40 percent suffer lifelong deformities and the rest die shortly after birth.

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