

MEDICAL

Optimism seen for organ donations

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Former vice-minister of health Huang Jiefu, a CPPCC member, said China's organ donations won't fall further short of demand after the suspension, which began in January, of using executed prisoners as a source of organs.

In fact, Huang said, the country's organ donation situation in the first two months since the change has given him reason to be optimistic.

About 380 people donated organs between Jan 1 and March 3, with a total of 937 organs donated. Huang said he is confident that there will

937 organs

donated this year between Jan 1 and March 3

be more than 10,000 organs donated this year.

Due to insufficient organ donations, executed prisoners had long been the main source of organs to ease the demand, although in recent years they were no longer the major source.

Since the controversial, decades-long practice ended in China on Jan 1, all organs now come solely from voluntary donations from citizens. This has prompted concerns

about a greater shortage.

Due to organ scarcity, the organ transplant system has been troubled in the past, with illegal trades frequent in the black market and even in some hospitals.

Huang said China was one of the countries with the lowest rate of organ donations before 2009. With the launch in 2010 of pilot projects nationwide for organ donations by citizens, the situation has gradually improved.

"The country became the top one in organ donation in Asia in 2014," he said.

Last year saw about 1,700 cases of organ donation, with more than 5,000 organs donated. About 80 percent

were donated by citizens, while 20 percent came from executed prisoners.

"A transparent organ donation system will lead to more qualified doctors and an increasing willingness of donation by citizens," Huang said.

He said Chinese tradition and the fairness of organ distribution have been two chief concerns leading to low participation.

Compared with other countries, Chinese are less willing to donate their organs after death, Huang said earlier in an interview with China Daily. He said the situation should gradually improve.