

## 《China to place emphasis on people when planning》

The earlier phase of urbanization in China was often seen as an excessive conversion of rural land into urban areas. In the work report delivered at the fourth session of the 12th National People's Congress Saturday, Premier Li Keqiang reiterated that emphasis will be placed on people during urbanization. He also set further reform of the household registration system as one of China's priorities in 2016.

Having worked as a cook in Zhengzhou, capital city of Henan province for 20 years, Cui Jingjie is finally able to afford to buy a small apartment in the city. His biggest dream is settling there with his wife and two children. Now it's getting closer.

"I bought the apartment in 2015. It cost me 700,000 yuan. I spent all my savings to pay for the downpayment of 280,000-yuan. I will pay back the remaining over 30 years," Cui said.

Buying an apartment in Zhengzhou means he can get a residency permit here and become a real urban resident. But he's still struggling with the decision. He's afraid of losing his farmland once he gets an urban hukou. He's also worried that his family won't have the same access to welfare as locals, even if they're granted the hukou. Actually, according to the local authorities, migrant workers who register to live in the city will be able to keep their land in their village.

"Since last October, houses covering a total of over 5 million square meters have been sold to farmers in the province. As for their farm land and homestead, it's up to them whether they are willing to give it back to the local government or not," Li Xuejun, chief engineer of Henan Provincial Dept. of Housing & Urban-Rural Development, said.

"We face different challenges in different phases of promoting urbanization. Today, it's no problem for most migrant workers to find a job in the cities. Now we need to think about how to settle them in the cities and enjoy quality life," Liu Daoxing, director of Henan Provincial Academy of Social Science, said.

China is making big efforts to promote a new type of urbanization in recent years. But it's not merely expanding cities and migrating people there from farm villages. That's a capital-oriented urbanization. Premier Li Keqiang, in a new government work report on March 5th, emphasized a people-oriented urbanization.

"China will deepen the reform of the household registration system, accelerate urbanization among rural migrants and link urbanization with people, land and funds. Migrant workers who haven't got the urban hukou should not be excluded from public services like education, employment and healthcare, etc," Premier Li said.

Some urban centres these days keep expanding regardless of their population growth, giving rise to ghost cities of empty streets and skyscrapers. The authorities failed to understand that the core of urbanization is not house building, but people.

People-oriented urbanization requires local governments to transform from an entrepreneurial actor in land dealings to a provider of public goods.

