

Two million disadvantaged families to benefit from home renovation

National campaign will see major work carried out on dwellings for key groups

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China will proceed with its national campaign of renovating dilapidated houses for the remaining 2 million families categorized as poor and other key groups by 2020, including families with members who are disabled.

The goal was disclosed in a three-year action plan released by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the Ministry of Finance last week.

The campaign covers four key groups: poverty-stricken families, families categorized as on a minimal living standard, families earning incomes lower than the local minimum, and families with members who are disabled.

The action plan aims to ensure that the country's last section of disadvantaged families, including the 2 million registered as poverty-stricken, can move into refurbished houses before China accomplishes its mission of lifting its population out of poverty and building a moderately prosperous society.

The document asks for a stricter process to identify families that can qualify, requiring the housing and urban-rural development authorities to work with departments in charge of poverty relief, civil affairs and managing people with disabilities, to recognize the right groups.

Precise records should be made for every single family that receives subsidies in the renovation plan, and dilapidated houses must be renovated to a standard in line with local conditions. All houses have to be reviewed before completion, the document said.

The renovation campaign, which started in 2008, has helped more than 20 million poverty-stricken families to build new homes up to 2016. According to the 2017 Statistical Communiqué on National Economic and Social Development by the National Bureau of Statistics, China completed renovation of dilapidated houses for 1.52 million families, who used to live below the poverty line, last year.



Subsidies fluctuate for different regions, mostly ranging from 2,000 yuan (\$290) to 20,000 yuan, depending on the economic situation of the families and the original condition of their homes. Families in Western and Central China are endowed with higher subsidies than those living in eastern areas. For example, the Tibet autonomous region has subsidies from 15,000 yuan up to 25,000 yuan, because of the higher cost of building new homes.

The renovation plan was welcomed by disadvantaged families, such as Zheng Fang, a 26-year-old primary school teacher in Yuexi county, Anhui province.

Zheng said her family was one of the beneficiaries and was given a 20,000-yuan subsidy to refurbish

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Zheng Fang, primary school teacher in Yuexi county, Anhui province

their house five years ago when she was still a college student. As traditional farmers, her parents spent all their earnings on her study at university, and had insufficient funds to refurbish their house that was built with mud bricks in the year she was born.

“I hoped my parents could move into a better home and encouraged them to build a new one,” the teacher said. “The 20,000 yuan came to our aid at the right time, though many will think it's not that much. But it helped my dream come true.”

Cai Jiawen, head of Zheng's village in the Dabie Mountains, said many people in rural areas have built new houses, but some cannot. Therefore, the renovation campaign can help narrow the gap between villagers and promote social fairness, he said.

Li Chang'an, a researcher at the

Institute of Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said housing renovation is a key part of China's poverty relief campaign.

The two ministries emphasized reviewing of applicant families in the action plan as they used to do, showing the importance attached to precisely targeted families and further reducing costs, Li said. Needy families should be included into the housing renovation campaign, Li said. If not, those who really need the aid will miss out on the favorable policies, leading to inequality, he said.

Meanwhile, the action plan set strict requirements concerning quality of location, structure, anti-earthquake reinforcements and construction materials. The researcher Li said the quality requirement for housing renovation not only meets the demands of beneficiary families but also is necessary to maintaining poverty relief as a sustainable process.

POLICY RESPONSE

Veterans, IPR and illegal garbage imports among key issues

By XU WEI
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Several ministry-level departments, including those for veteran affairs and education, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Veterans on frontline for job opportunities



The Ministry of Veterans Affairs unveiled a new set of criteria for assessing veterans for job placements on Thursday, which put more weight on military personnel's performance.

The regulation, jointly released by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and the Political Work Department of the Central Military Commission, further underlines the principle of matching jobs to veterans based on their performance while in service.

Veterans will be assigned jobs in accordance with a score, which is based on several categories such as performance in combat, training level and combat preparedness, length of service, living conditions of their service location, and military rank.

Those who earned honorary titles and medals while in service will be prioritized when receiving job assignments, while

those who made false claims in their personal files will see their scores reduced.

The new regulation will cover servicemen who retire starting in autumn.

Pupils, students to be better protected

The Ministry of Education has called for greater efforts to protect kindergarten pupils and school students from sexual assault in a notice released on Saturday.

Local education administrations and schools must promote sex education and teach children how to prevent sexual assault in class, through pamphlets or other channels, the notice said.

Schools should conduct better background checks on candidates concerning their conduct and psychological status while recruiting teachers, it said, adding that a database on sexual-assault-related crimes should be set up in coordination with public security departments.

The ministry also required schools to more carefully check the background information of their temporary teachers, saying those who were deprived of political rights or have received fixed-term imprisonment or penalties for serious crimes must not work for schools.

Local education administrations and schools should make joint efforts with public security departments to step up patrols around schools to prevent children from being sexually assaulted by people from outside, the notice said.

IPR violators to face stricter punishment

The National Intellectual Property Administration said on Wednesday that the protection of intellectual property rights will be stepped up with tougher punishments set to be imposed for IPR infringement.

Thirty-eight government departments including the National Development and Reform Commission, the People's Bank of China and the administration have jointly signed a memorandum to strengthen cooperation in the crackdown on IPR infringement.

The memorandum listed six types of infraction regarding intellectual property including repeated patent infringements, declining to execute punishments on patent violations and using fake documents in patent applications.

Enterprises that break the law may face multiple restrictions in receiving government funds, establishing financial institutions, and receiving customs certifications.

The administration will also publicize IPR infringements on a national online credit system, which accelerates the establishment of an intellectual property credit system.

Success for illegal garbage import crackdown



The General Administration of Customs said on Wednesday that customs nationwide seized 91,600 metric tons of illegal garbage imports in the latest round of an enforcement campaign.

Customs officers in 11 provincial regions including Guangdong province and Tianjin municipality detained 129 suspects and broke up 38 smuggling rings during the action. The smuggled trash included waste plastics and mineral residue, the administration said.

It was the fifth crackdown on such smuggling launched by the administration this year. So far, 718 suspects from 202 smuggling rings have been detained, with evidence of more than 1.55 million tons of illegal solid waste imports found.

China began importing solid waste as a source of raw materials in the 1980s, and was for years been the world's largest importer. The government decided last year to phase out and completely halt such imports by the end of 2019, except for certain categories.

Policy digest

Tax breaks will add spur to economic growth

The State Council, China's Cabinet, on Saturday unveiled a temporary regulation on deductions for the taxable income of individuals as part of measures to reduce the tax burden and boost consumption.

Residents with expenditures in six areas — children's education, continuing education, health treatment for serious illness, housing loan interest, rent and elderly care — can claim a tax reduction on income, the regulation said.

Taxpayers who continue their education can also claim a tax deduction of 400 yuan (\$58) a month for 48 months, at most, for a degree or 3,600 yuan in total for professional qualifications. Taxpayers with serious illnesses will have their amount of out-of-pocket medical costs (between 15,000 yuan and 80,000 yuan) deducted from their taxable income each year, the regulation said.

Taxpayers or their spouses who have mortgage loans for a first home can have a deduction of 1,000 yuan per month from taxable income. Housing rent deduction of up to 18,000 yuan each year will be granted to taxpayers who do not have their own homes in the city where they work, it said.

An amount of up to 2,000 yuan every month will be deducted from an only-child taxpayer's taxable income for his or her parent who is over 60. Those who have siblings can share the 2,000-yuan deduction quota, according to the regulation.

China started implementing a new standard for individual income tax from October. The threshold for personal income tax exemption was raised from 3,500 yuan to 5,000 yuan per month or 60,000 yuan per year.

The new temporary measures will come into effect along with the amended personal individual income tax law on Jan 1.

Regulatory documents to be better screened

China will establish a mechanism to review the legal validity of government regulatory documents before their implementation, according to a guideline published by the General Office of the State Council on Thursday.

The move is part of the country's effort to preserve legislative convergence and accelerate building a government in line with the law and improve governance, the guideline said. It added that government departments nationwide should fully recognize the importance of promoting the review on regulatory documents and carry out the review work industriously. A special department will be set up or designated for the review. Departments are also required to include the review in their evaluation systems for advancing law-based governance, the guideline said.

The Ministry of Justice will take charge of organizing, coordinating, propelling and giving guidance, and governments in each region can report their implementation of the circular and related issues to the ministry, it said.

Measures will help people to enjoy holiday

Authorities have called for efforts to ensure the public can enjoy a happy and peaceful holiday for the New Year and the upcoming Spring Festival, according to a notice unveiled on Sunday. Authorities at all levels must ensure the implementation of poverty alleviation policies and make sure that pensions are issued in full and on time, the guideline said.

More efforts must be made to extend helping the elderly people and the disabled, especially those faced with difficult circumstances, and ensure the safety of left-behind children in rural areas, it said.

The notice also stressed the importance of ensuring market supply, especially in gas, coal and electricity, and the safety of food and drug products.

Authorities will also take measures to ensure safe public travel during the Spring Festival, with more actions set to be taken to meet the demand for tickets among migrant workers and college students, the guideline said.

Work safety will be another priority for authorities, as the guideline called for the prevention of various accidents as well as infectious diseases. The guideline also cautioned against government officials violating the frugality rules and vowed enhanced disciplinary measures during the festive period.

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