

Timely upgrade for household service sector

Second-child policy boosts demand for nannies, helping to lift more rural poor out of poverty ahead of CPC centenary

By LI LEI
lilei@chinadaily.com.cn

The central government has decided to upgrade an industry that has created jobs for tens of millions of rural women — household service.

The State Council released a guideline on Wednesday that encourages domestic service providers to sign labor contracts with their employees, pay salaries higher than the minimum wage, and offer social security to them.

Enterprises answering the call will qualify for value-added tax deductions, easier loans and diversified financing channels, the guideline said.

It urged the setting up of related majors in colleges and training programs run by home service enterprises. Sharing of information will also be enhanced between cities with huge demand for home services and less developed areas with large populations, it said.

The guideline said a credit system will be created to ban workers who misbehave from entering the industry again.

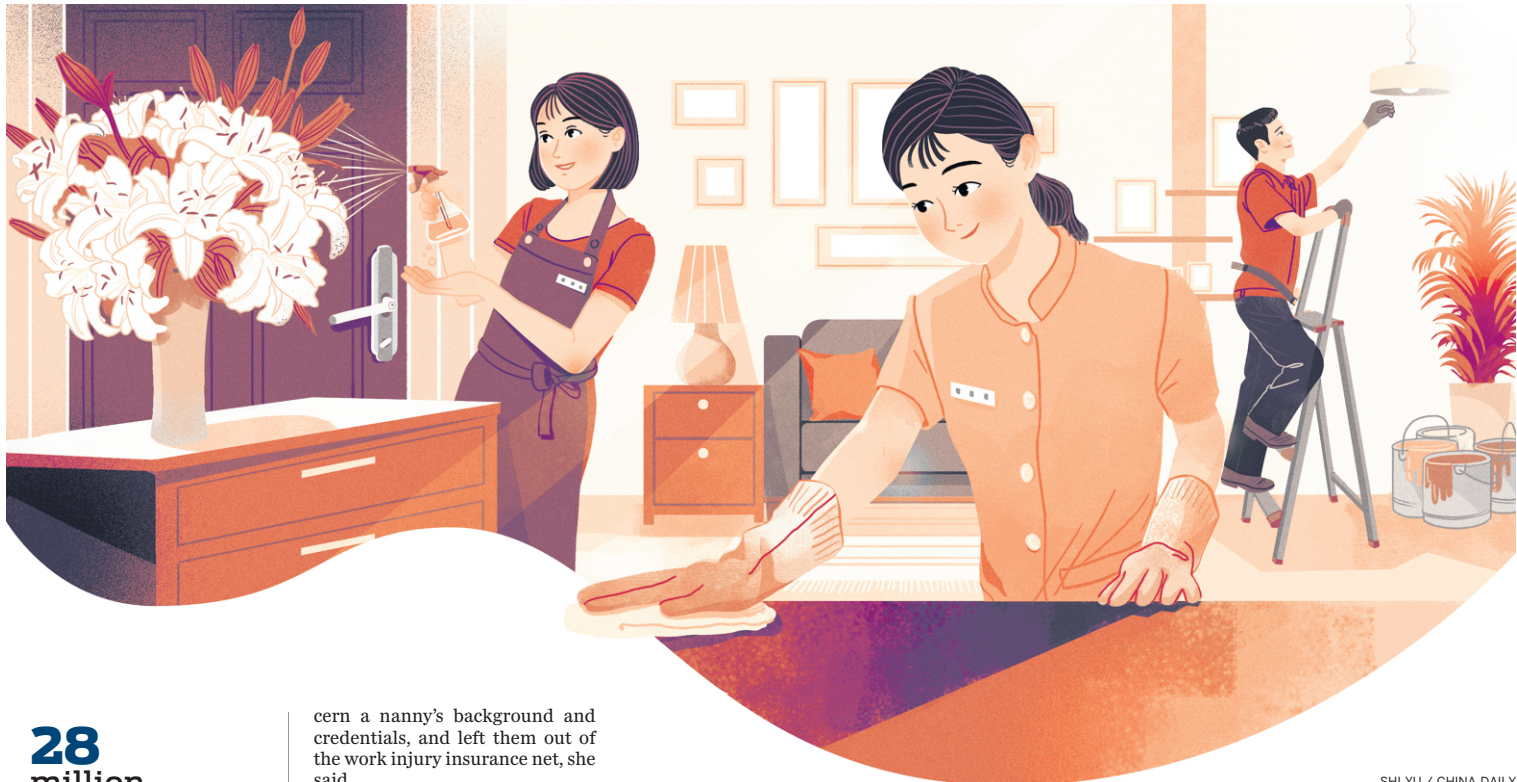
China had about 28 million domestic workers in 2017, when the revenue of the home service sector reached 440 billion yuan (\$64 billion), up 26 percent year-on-year, according to the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner.

Despite the rapid growth, the home service sector, which employs many migrant workers, is known for its instability and lack of job security.

The latest move is expected to bring about drastic changes to home service enterprises that mostly function as matchmakers. In that role, they have not been obliged to offer pre-work training and have not been held accountable for work related accidents.

Jiang Ying, a professor at China University of Labor Relations, said the aging population and the universal second-child policy have fueled growth in the sector, but its casual arrangement has hampered its further development.

It has made it difficult to dis-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

28 million

the number of domestic workers in the country in 2017, who helped generate revenue of 440 billion yuan

500 million

the estimated number of people who will be age 60 or older by 2050, creating explosive demand for care services

cern a nanny's background and credentials, and left them out of the work injury insurance net, she said.

But Jiang added that apart from helping the rural workforce seek jobs that boost their income, it is essential for government to help solve follow-up issues such as the senior citizens and children left behind in rural areas.

China still has more than 10 million rural poor waiting to be lifted out of poverty by the end of next year, in time for the centenary of the Communist Party of China in 2021.

Providing jobs to those impoverished people is seen as an essential means to help raise their income above the national poverty line — an average of 2,300 yuan (\$335) for every family member a year, set in 2010, adjusted for purchasing power parity.

The domestic sector, though skill-based, has limited educational requirements and has long been favored by rural woman seeking jobs in cities. Skilled domestic workers, such as a post-

partum nanny, can earn between 10,000 to 20,000 yuan a month in Beijing.

China had more than 149 million people 65 years of age or older in 2016, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Experts predict the number of people who are age 60 or older could reach 500 million by 2050, creating explosive demand for care services.

As most parents in China rely on their own parents or other relatives for child care, the aging of society is likely to create demand for nannies, especially after the universal second-child policy was adopted in 2016.

Beijing college professor Wang Bin, 38, who hired a postpartum nanny after he and his wife had their first child this year, said pressure from work, aging parents, and their own inexperience

as parents had all contributed to the decision.

"Nannies are quite experienced and it saved a lot of trouble," he said.

The NDRC said in a news release that the demographic changes, along with urban residents' ever-increasing purchasing power, are fueling growth in the home service sector of about 20 percent year-on-year.

Despite the demand, a flurry of cases involving unqualified nannies has sparked public fury in recent years.

One of the most high-profile cases centered on a woman named Mo Huanjing, a nanny who was accused of arson and sentenced to death last year.

Mo, 35, with heavy gambling debts, managed to obtain a live-in nanny job at a home in Hangzhou in 2016. She was later found guilty of

setting a fire that she had intended to put out to win the family's gratitude and financial payback. But the fire spread quickly, killing four in the house.

Another case that grabbed nationwide attention involved a woman named He Xiaoping, 48, from Nanchong, Sichuan province. In 1992, He went to Chongqing and became a nanny using fake identification papers. During her work, He took her client's 1-year-old boy away and returned to her hometown.

She revealed her secret in 2017 after watching a television show that helps people find long-lost relatives, which she said touched her deeply.

The NDRC said the guideline is essential as it seeks to fix problems from the top and improve the policy system, and will answer people's concerns.

POLICY RESPONSE

Initiatives see passport charges reduced and disaster relief funds given a boost

By WANG QINGYUN
wangqingyun@chinadaily.com.cn

Several ministry-level departments, including the National Immigration Administration, the central bank and the Ministry of Education, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Passports and travel passes now cheaper



The fees charged for ordinary passports and travel passes for Hong Kong and Macao were reduced from Monday.

The National Immigration Administration said the fee charged for the issuance of an ordinary passport has been reduced by 40 yuan (\$5.80) to 120 yuan, while the fee charged for the issuance of a travel pass for Hong Kong and Macao has been reduced by 20 yuan to 60 yuan.

People whose applications were accepted before Monday will need to pay according to the

original standard.

The move is expected to benefit 65 million people every year, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Paper to spell out aid to small businesses

A white paper on financial services for China's small and micro-sized enterprises will be published soon, the central bank said in an online statement.

Compiled by the People's Bank of China and other departments, including the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, the white paper will sum up the policies introduced last year to guide financial services for small and micro-sized enterprises and the effects they have yielded in order to better respond to public concerns.

Credit support for small and micro-sized enterprises increased last year and their financing cost fell thanks to better financial policies and support, the statement said.

1.16b yuan given to areas hit by floods, drought

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Emergency Management allocated 1.16 billion yuan on Thursday to 12 areas hit by floods or drought, the Ministry of Emergency Management said in an online statement.

The recipients include the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, and the provinces of

Jiangsu, Anhui, Fujian, Jiangxi and Shandong.

The ministries also allocated 160 million yuan to Sichuan, which was hit by earthquakes, to carry out emergency response work.

The new funding is follow-up financial support to provinces affected by the natural disasters. The ministries had already allocated hundreds of millions of yuan to the provinces of Sichuan, Jiangxi and Guangdong and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

The Ministry of Emergency Management has dispatched a number of work units to assist in disaster relief efforts by local authorities.

Smartphone app for information about NGOs

A smartphone application launched by the Ministry of Civil Affairs will share information about NGOs with the public, including their social credit codes and their legal representatives.

People can use the app, available in WeChat, to check whether an NGO is registered with the civil affairs authorities and whether it has been subjected to administrative punishment.

They can also look up whether a charitable organization is eligible for public fundraising.

The app also contains a list of organizations that broke the law and had their registrations revoked by the authorities.

The app shares basic informa-

tion about more than 830,000 NGOs, Xinhua News Agency reported.

Physical and aesthetic education to be upgraded

The Ministry of Education plans to select about 20 universities and colleges this year to help primary and middle schools in rural areas promote physical and aesthetic education.

Teachers and students from the universities and colleges should design physical and aesthetic courses for rural schools that do not have such classes, including soccer, swimming, martial arts, choral singing, playing musical instruments and dance.

Art groups from the universities and colleges are also encouraged to perform in the rural schools.

Normal universities and colleges of physical education and art are encouraged to apply to join the project.



Policy digest

Guideline aims to foster industry in rural areas



A guideline on the vitalization of industries in rural areas issued by the State Council on Friday aims to develop sound and mature industries in rural areas in five to 10 years.

Different rural regions should develop industries according to their own advantages, the guideline said, and farmers should benefit as much as possible from the added value yielded by the industries. The industries should also create as many jobs for rural people as possible.

The idea that clear waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets should be implemented and the environment must be protected while developing the industries, the guideline said.

The industries in need of development include modern farming and livestock breeding, tourism, agricultural produce processing and services for farmers.

The guideline emphasized the need for high-quality, environmental friendly development and encouraged the nurturing of industries that are land, energy and water efficient. Backward production facilities that the government has ordered be shut down and those that pollute the environment must not be allowed in the countryside.

To promote innovation in rural areas, the guideline called for the establishment of national agricultural high-tech industries demonstration zones and

national agricultural science and technology parks.

A mechanism should be set up where companies, universities and research institutes work together to solve key technological problems, and the authorities should help nurture large seed companies with competitive edges.

The guideline also encouraged people, including migrant workers and veterans, to start businesses and innovative projects in rural areas.

More financial support for vocational students

More financial support will be provided to students learning vocational skills, the State Council decided at an executive meeting on Wednesday.

From this year on, the number of students in higher vocational colleges eligible for the national scholarship will increase to 15,000 from 5,000.

National grants will also cover more higher vocational college students, with the grants increasing to an average of 3,300 yuan (\$482) per student, up from 3,000 yuan.

The country will also set up a scholarship for students in secondary vocational schools this year. As many as 20,000 students will be covered by the scholarship every year, with each one getting 6,000 yuan.

The government clearly stated its intention to increase scholarships and grants for higher vocational colleges in the Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang in March.

It will speed up the development of modern vocational education to ease employment pressure and a shortage of talent with high-end skills, Li said in the report.

Higher vocational colleges will enroll 1 million more students this year, and senior high school graduates, veterans, unemployed people and migrant workers are encouraged to study there, Li said.

WANG QINGYUN