

# POLICY REVIEW

## Action plan a boost for day care services

Safety and health of young children to be a top priority, with measures to ensure government oversight

By XU WEI

xuweix@chinadaily.com.cn

Choosing a day care center for her 2-year-old son proved a daunting challenge for Shanghai resident Wang Jie.

While many Chinese couples rely on relatives, especially their parents, for babysitting, Wang, 27, and her husband, who live in the city's Jing'an district, had to find a solution on their own.

"It is a physically demanding job to babysit. The fact that our parents are either yet to retire or in poor physical condition made that impossible," Wang said, adding that the high cost of living in a top-tier city like Shanghai meant she had to work.

Wang, who used to be a kindergarten teacher, said she carefully investigated each care center before sending her son there.

He is now attending a second center after the first one she chose went out of business due to poor management. It has yet to refund the money she paid.

"You want to find facilities with teachers of high quality, good sanitation conditions and a good price," she said.

"Infants are not capable of caring for themselves, and thus the quality of caregivers is the key."

Solving the dilemma faced by parents like Wang has been a priority for the central government this year.

In May, the General Office of the State Council rolled out a guideline to encourage the development of care services for children under age 3.

In the latest measure, the National Development and Reform Commission and the National Health Commission released an action plan last month designed to encourage social capital to boost the supply of affordable care services for children under age 3.

The central government will encourage municipal authorities to systematically plan and develop a system of care services through investment from government budgets.

Municipal authorities will provide a list of policy incentives and sign cooperation agreements with businesses to boost the supply of affordable child care services, the action plan said.

Businesses, including institutions and social organizations must make public a list of the affordable services they provide and accept supervision from the public, it added.

It also promised equal treatment

“

It is a physically demanding job to babysit. The fact that our parents are either yet to retire or in poor physical condition made that impossible.”

Wang Jie, mother of a 2-year-old son in Shanghai

**15.23 million**

the number of China's new-borns last year

for all types of businesses, whether they are domestic or foreign, State-owned or private.

The action plan said the safety and health of infants and young children will be made a top priority, with measures to ensure that government oversight is in place and the development and operations of day care centers are in keeping with laws and regulations.

Local authorities will also be encouraged to boost land use support to such services, and public rental housing could be used by day care centers for free in some areas.

To boost the supply of talent, more colleges and vocational schools will introduce majors to train day care center workers, and the government will include infant caregivers in its subsidized vocational training scheme, according to the plan.

The measures launched by the authorities come as China grapples with a dwindling birthrate, even though every couple is now allowed to have two children following the introduction of the second-child policy in January 2016.

China recorded 15.23 million births last year, down 2 million from 2017 and the second consecutive annual decline, with the official birthrate dropping to the lowest level since 1961, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

A poll conducted by the National Health Commission in 2016 that surveyed thousands of parents in 10 cities found that over a third of parents with children under age 3 wanted day care centers to look after their children on weekdays. However, only 4.1 percent had succeeded in finding a place in such a center for their child.

Chu Zhaohui, a researcher at the National Institute of Education Sciences, said concerns about the dipping birthrate were behind the government's decision to boost the supply of affordable child care services.

"The government was rarely involved in the sector previously, and the drop in new births now

necessitates more government involvement," he said.

However, Chu said, it was important for the authorities to rely on the market to meet the demand for day care services, adding that the authorities should prioritize the development of the kind of basic day care services that are essential for most families.

### POLICY RESPONSE

## River pollution, ship fuel and school toilets among issues addressed

By MO JINGXI

mofjingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Several ministry-level departments, including those responsible for transport, ecology and environment, and development and reform, have recently responded to issues of public concern.

### Sewage outlet inspections on Yangtze, tributaries

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment will complete inspections of all sewage outlets on the Yangtze River and rivers and streams that flow into it before the end of this year, ministry spokesman Liu Youbin said on Oct 29.

Liu told a news briefing the inspection work was being conducted in three phases.

In the first phase, the ministry inspected sewage outlets on the



Yangtze and its tributaries in Chongqing and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guizhou and Yunnan in September.

He said the second phase, involving Shanghai and the provinces of Hubei and Anhui, was expected to start this month, covering about 8,000 kilometers of river bank.

The third phase, to start next month, will involve the provinces of Jiangxi, Hunan and Sichuan and cover about 9,000 km of river bank.

The inspection will help lay a foundation for monitoring and managing the sewage outlets, Liu said.

### Improvement of business environment on agenda

China will make more efforts to deepen reforms and continuously improve its business environment, Lin Nianxiu, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said on Oct 28.

Speaking at a meeting held to exchange related experiences, Liu said a market-oriented, law-based and world-class business environment was of great significance for enhancing the vitality of market entities, improving the government's capacity for governance and promoting a higher level of opening-up.

Lin also stressed the need to build a coordinated, efficient and cooperative governance mechanism, establish and improve fair, open and transparent market rules, provide equal, convenient, efficient and intelligent public services, deepen reform, strengthen the rule of law and focus on boosting the business environment nationwide.

According to the World Bank's Doing Business 2020 report, China's ranking climbed to 31 this year from 46 last year, and the country was also among the 10 economies with the biggest improvement in terms of their business environment for the second year in a row.

### Two-year campaign for better school toilets

China has launched a two-year campaign to ensure primary and secondary schools have safe, clean and environmentally friendly toilets, the National Development and Reform Commission said on Oct 30.

The campaign would make toilets in rural schools in central and western regions the priority, a notice jointly released by the NDRC and the Ministry of Education said.

It also required efforts to specify



pragmatic solutions for each school according to their conditions and avoid uncompleted or impractical projects.

China launched a "toilet revolution" in 2015 to increase the number and standard of toilets at tourist sites. The campaign was later expanded to improve public toilets in cities and build better private toilets in rural areas.

### Cleaner fuel for ships on international routes

Ships on international routes will not be allowed to use fuel with a sulfur content higher than 0.5 percent in Chinese waters from Jan 1, according to a plan released by the Ministry of Transport's Maritime Safety Administration on Oct 25.

According to the plan, ships that enter the emission control areas of

rivers in the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta and rivers entering the Bohai Sea will be forbidden from using fuel with a sulfur content higher than 0.1 percent. That restriction will also apply to the waters of Hainan province in 2022.

In order to implement the International Maritime Organization's guidance on sulfur limits, the plan clarifies the measures to be taken in dealing with ships that do not meet fuel standards, establishes a nationwide system to report information about ship fuel, and strengthens the supervision of ships on international routes arriving in Chinese waters.

According to official data, last year's sulfur oxide emissions from ships in emission control areas were down by 160,000 metric tons compared with those in 2015.



### Policy digest

#### Food safety regulation clarifies responsibilities

A revised regulation on the implementation of China's Food Safety Law will take effect on Dec 1, the State Council said in a statement released on Oct 31.

The revised regulation, comprising 10 chapters and 86 articles, deals with areas such as food safety standards, food production, food inspection and the handling of accidents related to food safety.

Tougher supervision is highlighted in its general rules, which require governments above county level to establish a uniform and authoritative supervision mechanism to enhance regulatory capacity building.

National and local standards for food safety will be formulated and enterprises will be required to implement them once they are released. However, no local food safety standards will be allowed to be formulated on health food and supplements, food for special medical purposes and infant formula as they are not local specialty foods, the revised regulation says.

In the chapter of supervision and administration, there are regulations on random inspections and other ways of supervising food producers. A joint punishment system for discredited enterprises will be established, along with a blacklist system for serious violators of food safety rules.

The regulation also clarifies the primary food safety responsibilities of producers and business operators, specifies the duties of top corporate leaders, regulates the storage and transportation of food products, bans the false promotion of food products, and improves the management of special food.

Under the rules, legal persons, persons in charge, managers directly in charge and individuals directly responsible will be fined if the entity they work for intentionally commits an illegal act.



#### Guideline promotes red lines for development

The General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued a guideline on Friday to promote the coordination and implementation of limits on development plans.

The document stressed the importance of ecological protection, farmland protection and the economical use of land.

The limits — red lines for the adjustment of economic structures, planning of industrial development and advancement of urbanization — will consolidate the foundation for China's sustainable development, the guideline said.

Efforts will be made to set red lines for ecological protection based on ecological functions. Priority will be given to regions with important functions such as biodiversity, soil and water conservation and regions with extremely vulnerable ecologies.

To ensure national food safety and the supply of important farm produce, permanent basic farmland will be defined and given permanent special protection, the guideline said.

The guideline also required setting boundaries for urban development based on green development requirements.

By the end of next year, the limits will be incorporated into the national unified information platform for land and space to enable information sharing and stricter control.

By 2035, China will have a scientific, moderate and orderly territorial spatial distribution system, according to the guideline.