

POLICY REVIEW

Cabinet bolsters job growth measures

Boosting domestic demand and stabilizing foreign trade are crucial, the State Council says

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The State Council reiterated pledges to shore up the job market as it rolled out measures to cancel unreasonable restrictions on nonstandard employment, and bolster financial aid to struggling companies that keep staff on.

Meanwhile, industry experts said more government support must be offered to individuals in nonstandard forms of employment, including jobs created by new business models.

At its executive meeting on Wednesday, the Cabinet said China faced mounting pressure to stabilize the job market, as internal and external risks and challenges rose.

The employment-first policy must be carried out on a larger scale, and more jobs created by boosting domestic demand and stabilizing foreign trade, it said in a statement.

China added 11.93 million urban jobs in the first 10 months of this year. The jobless rate in urban areas was 5.1 percent in October, down 0.1 percentage points from the previous month, the National Bureau of Statistics said last month. In November, the country's official manufacturing purchasing managers' index rose to 50.2 percent, while the PMI for the non-manufacturing sector increased to a seven-month high of 54.4. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion.

Premier Li Keqiang said at the meeting that a stable job market is a key indicator of the economy performing within a reasonable range, and it is important to steady the current jobs position while making efforts to create new ones.

He warned of greater risks and challenges potentially faced by the country next year. "The Chinese economy is on a curve of continuous expansion, and new jobs will be created in this process. It is not enough to stabilize the job market solely with jobs that are already in place," he said.

The meeting rolled out more incentives for business startups, including lowering the threshold for guaranteed loans to micro and small startups and the government offering more jobs serving the public good.

The government will launch pilot programs for individuals suffering from occupational injuries while working in jobs created by new business models.

Wang Ting, a human resources management and employment professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, said a number of factors had increased pressure on the job market. These included ongoing trade frictions between China and the United States, sluggish global economic growth, mounting downward pressure on the Chinese economy, and the rise of automation in the manufacturing sector.

Meanwhile, the rise of new business models, such as the sharing economy and the online platform economy, had spawned a large number of nonstandard jobs, which had become important for the labor market.

Wang cited the example of ride-hailing service drivers and express

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delivery workers, many of whom worked unconventional hours. They generally had no social security benefits as they often do not meet thresholds on contributions or benefits, he said.

Wang said it was important for authorities to come up with measures to protect their legitimate rights.

Zhang Chenggang, a job market researcher at the Capital University of Economics and Business, said even though the manufacturing and services sectors had shown signs of recovery according to the November surveys, authorities cannot afford to be complacent about job creation due to domestic and foreign uncertainties.

"We are still seeing problems such as strict standards and high thresholds in market access and qualifica-

tion accreditation for nonstandard employment. The government support and services system has yet to cover those new forms of employment," he said.

The Cabinet meeting pledged to step up support for businesses to keep their payrolls stable. It also extended for another year policies of lower premiums for unemployment insurance and workplace injury compensation insurance, partial

reimbursement of unemployment insurance contributions and subsidies for in-job vocational training.

Authorities will offer subsidies for jobless middle-school graduates under 20 if they take part in skills training.

The meeting also adopted measures to encourage more employers to hire disabled people and help them receive vocational training and employment services.



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POLICY RESPONSE

Social insurance expanded and rules for domestics reviewed

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Several ministry-level departments, including those responsible for commerce, health, and human resources and social security, have recently responded to issues of public concern.

Insurance open to HK, Macao, Taiwan residents

Residents of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan will be able to apply for Chinese mainland social insurance starting next year, according to provisional regulations issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security on Dec 3.

The regulations will take effect on Jan 1, and apply to people who work, study or live in the Chinese mainland.

Residents lawfully recruited and employed by Chinese mainland enterprises should take part in five basic insurance programs — endowment,

medical, work-related injury, unemployment insurance and maternity.

Those who live in the Chinese mainland but are not employed, can join endowment and medical insurance programs according to the regulations of the cities they live in. The regulations also cover people who are self-employed or flexible employees.

The procedure to join social insurance programs and the benefits, are the same as those for mainland residents.

Those already in social insurance programs in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan can provide documentation to be exempted from the Chinese mainland programs.

Input into regulation of domestic workers sought

The Ministry of Commerce and the National Health Commission are seeking public comment on a draft to regulate physical checkups for domestic workers.

The draft specifies the kinds of health conditions that prohibit people offering domestic services. They include serious cardiopulmonary disease, drug abuse, infectious tuberculosis and a history of mental illness.

It divides domestic services into four categories according to whether workers have direct contact with food and their customers, as well as the kind of people they are taking care of, and establishes four different sets of health requirements.

Those who take care of pregnant women, new mothers or infants are subjected to the strictest standards.



Companies offering domestic services are required to have their workers take physical checkups on a regular basis to see if they meet the health requirements, the draft says.

It also encourages hospitals to share test results on an online platform managed by the Ministry of Commerce, where consumers and domestic services companies can review the results with the consent of the workers.

Growth target set for new energy vehicle industry

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has issued a draft plan to develop the new energy vehicle industry from 2021 to 2035.

The goal is to make China a powerhouse of new energy vehicles after 15 years. By 2025, there should be major breakthroughs for key technologies including battery, motor and operating systems, the draft says.



The draft calls for improving innovation capacities, building a new type of industrial ecology, and promoting the integrated development of the new energy vehicle industry with other industries such as energy, transport and telecommunications.

It also calls for boosting infrastructure, including charging stations and wireless telecommunications networks that support self-driving.

The draft says deeper international cooperation is needed to enhance the competitive edge of the industry.

As one of the measures to guarantee the industry's development, the draft calls for heightened protection of intellectual property rights.

Policy digest



Cabinet acts to ensure migrant worker pay

A draft of regulations to prevent employers defaulting on migrant workers' wages was passed at the State Council executive meeting on Wednesday.

Migrant workers have made a significant and special contribution to the country's development, and they must be paid on time and in full, Premier Li Keqiang said at the meeting.

The draft said employers and local governments and their departments, are responsible for on-time payments to migrant workers.

It said construction companies that don't have enough funds for their projects should not be issued with permits, and there should be a blacklist of employers who default on migrant workers' wages.

Companies that refuse to pay may be forced to make compulsory payments, according to the draft.

It was emphasized at the meeting that governments at various levels, State-owned companies and public institutions had no excuse to default on migrant workers' wages.

Plan issued for building national cultural parks



The general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council have issued a plan to build national cultural parks for the Great Wall, the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal and the Long March.

The plan was approved at a meeting of the central committee for deepening overall reform on July 24, which was presided over by President Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission.

The plan says the construction of the parks should be completed by the end of 2023, so that the relics and cultural resources of the Great Wall, the canal and the Long March will be better protected, inherited and utilized.

The parks should be managed efficiently, with clearly defined rights and responsibilities and inspection that conforms to standards, the plan also said.

The construction of the parks for the Great Wall covers 15 regions, including Beijing and Tianjin municipalities, Hebei and Shanxi provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

The construction of the parks for the canal covers eight regions, including Beijing, Tianjin and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, while the Long March parks spread across 15 regions, including Fujian, Jiangxi, Gansu and Qinghai provinces.

The plan requires revising the regulations on protecting the Great Wall and formulating regulations on protecting the canal and the cultural relics of the Long March.

It also says relevant provinces should carry out a comprehensive assessment of their cultural relics and formulate their own planning suggestions, as part of efforts to design specific plans for constructing the parks.

Local authorities should promote basic projects, including repairs, reconstruction and tourism, in order to protect and utilize the resources.

It also urged a sound construction and management system of the national cultural parks, and called for favorable policies and funds to support the parks.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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