

POLICY REVIEW

Cabinet addresses job market pressure

Measures to expand postgraduate enrollment and employment channels for migrant workers

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The State Council has scaled up measures to reduce pressure on the job market amid the novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak, including steps to expand enrollment in postgraduate programs and employment channels for migrant workers.

At its executive meeting on Feb 25, the Cabinet decided to allow higher education institutions to expand enrollment in postgraduate programs this year and to let more junior college students continue their studies to earn bachelor's degrees.

It also pledged to make more jobs in primary medical care and social services available to college graduates and to bolster support to small and medium-sized enterprises in recruiting graduates.

Employers will be encouraged to delay this year's season for interviewing and hiring college graduates, and colleges will give them additional time to complete graduation procedures, such as transferring their archives, the Cabinet said in a statement.

The meeting also decided to expand employment channels for migrant workers, who will be encouraged to find jobs near their homes. The government will initiate several projects providing a large number of jobs to spur hiring activities, the statement said.

Weng Tiehui, vice-minister of education, told a news briefing on Friday that this year's expanded postgraduate program will see an additional 189,000 undergraduate students given the opportunity to further their studies.

Meanwhile, an additional 322,000 junior college students will be able to pursue bachelor's degrees at colleges, she said.

Weng said the expanded postgraduate programs will focus on disciplines such as clinical medicine, public health, integrated circuits and artificial intelligence, while junior college students will be encouraged to study majors such as preventive medi-

cine, emergency management and aged care.

The number of college graduates will hit 8.74 million this year, 400,000 more than last year, according to the ministry.

"The pressure on the job market is huge in the first place," Weng said. "The outbreak has aggravated the situation for college graduates."

She said the key to helping graduates find jobs was to stabilize the country's economic fundamentals.

Weng said that even though the outbreak had hit the job market hard, there were still immense opportunities in the development of new growth engines and the upgrading of traditional ones.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, China's manufacturing purchasing managers' index fell to a historic low of 35.7 in February, while nonmanufacturing PMI — a gauge of sentiment in the services and construction sectors — dropped to 29.6, from 54.1 in January. A PMI reading above 50 indicates expansion.

You Jun, vice-minister of human resources and social security, told Friday's news briefing that the out-

break had resulted in a drop in hiring demand and had forced the suspension of recruitment.

The ministry would work to expand the employment channels for college graduates, encourage online hiring activities and offer more internships to help students find jobs, he said.

You said the epidemic could strike a more direct blow to the jobs of migrant workers. There were 290 million migrant workers in China at the end of last year, with 75 million working outside their home provinces.

The outbreak had also resulted in labor shortages for businesses in the country's more developed eastern provinces, he said, and the authorities would provide chartered vehicles or trains to help migrant workers return to their jobs.

In the meantime, the ministry will organize more online hiring events for migrant workers, encourage them to take up farming, find jobs in rural infrastructure development and help them find jobs in major projects, You added.

Li Changan, a professor of labor economics at University of International Business and Economics, said the government

must prioritize measures to make up for delays in job recruitment for college graduates and migrant workers caused by the outbreak.

"For migrant workers, more work must be done to ensure information about labor demand can be released in time," he said.

It was also important for the authorities to further tap into the potential of the digital economy and promote work offered on flexible pay arrangements to create more jobs, Li said.

Policy digest

Hazardous chemicals industry made safer



China has issued a guideline on enhancing the safe production of hazardous chemicals to prevent major accidents and protect people's lives and property.

The guideline, published on Wednesday, underscores the importance of strengthening risk controls, management, enterprises' responsibilities, fundamental support, guarantees and supervision to ensure the safe production of hazardous chemicals.

Precise risk screening will be carried out to assess the risks in enterprises, chemical industrial parks and places that produce and store hazardous chemicals, it said.

The industrial structure will be further adjusted and factories that don't meet national or industrial safe production standards should be phased out.

Safety controls in key links in the production, transportation and storage of hazardous goods such as oil and gas will be strengthened, and the supervision and control of hazardous waste, including discarded hazardous chemicals, will be improved.

According to the guideline, intentional acts that seriously endanger the safety of people's lives and property, such as evading supervision of safe production and concealing hazardous goods, will be punished and also included in the social credit records of organizations involved and the people in charge of them.

It also stressed the need to boost the application of high-tech solutions, including big data and artificial intelligence, in monitoring and tracking the production, storage, transportation and disposal of hazardous chemicals around the country.

A group of professional and well-established leading enterprises will be cultivated to provide management and technical services for companies in the hazardous chemicals industry, the guideline said.

China posted a stable workplace safety record in the first 11 months of last year, with fewer production-related accidents compared with the same period the previous year, according to the Ministry of Emergency Management.

From January to November, the number of major accidents in China — those that caused three to 10 deaths — dropped 10.4 percent year-on-year, the ministry said.

Focus on educational supervision, guidance

The general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council have issued a guideline for deepening reform of the educational supervision and guidance system and mechanism.

According to the guideline, published on Feb 19, a socialist educational supervision and guidance system and mechanism with Chinese characteristics will be in place by 2022.

It will work efficiently, with full coverage, authoritative results and enhanced accountability for oversight, it said.

The guideline requires efforts to further reform the management system for educational oversight and guidance, including improving the setup of education oversight agencies at all levels, and strengthening supervision of the performance of governments at lower levels in carrying out their educational responsibilities to ensure that the Party and the state's education policies are effectively implemented.

Educational supervision and guidance agencies are urged to develop new ways of overseeing the performance of local governments in carrying out their educational responsibilities as well as educational institutions in running schools, according to the guideline.

Xinhua contributed to the story.

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POLICY RESPONSE

Customs clearance eased for international freight train users

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A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for customs, human resources and social security, and poverty alleviation, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Boost for China-Europe rail freight services

The General Administration of Customs issued 10 measures on Feb 24 to support development of China-Europe Railway Express freight train services and promote foreign trade.

The measures will allow companies to go through customs clearance procedures either at the port of entry or exit, or at the places where

they are located, the administration said.

Enterprises can also apply to customs to merge their manifests to reduce the number and cost of declarations.

The administration will also strengthen cooperation between customs and the railway network, support the construction of China-Europe Railway Express hubs and use trains to expand imports.

The China-Europe rail network connects 62 Chinese cities, including Chengdu, Zhengzhou and Urumqi, with 51 European cities, such as Duisburg, Lodz and Antwerp, in 15 countries.

Online vocational skills training encouraged

China will help enterprises give online vocational skills training to their employees during the novel coronavirus epidemic outbreak, a notice published on Wednesday said.

The notice, jointly issued by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Finance, said more than 50 high-quality online vocational training

platforms nationwide will be selected to provide digital training resources for more than 100 occupations and more than 1 million people this year.

Companies that provide online training for their employees before resuming operation will be able to receive government subsidies, and workers who obtain certificates after completing online training will be eligible for allowances.

To encourage more workers to take up online training, people who have difficulties making a living or finding a job will be granted subsistence allowances while they are training, it said.

Poverty alleviation officials back on the job

Poverty alleviation officials stationed in villages in provincial-level regions other than Hubei have been told to return to work to help fulfill China's goal of eliminating absolute poverty this year, a statement published on Wednesday said.

It said the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development had issued a notice requiring efforts to ensure

poverty alleviation tasks can be completed on schedule amid the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic.

Officials unable to work due to epidemic control measures should apply for leave, it said, and personnel turnover, if necessary, should be conducted in a timely manner.

The notice also said epidemic control should be the priority of officials in regions severely hit by the virus and poverty alleviation measures should be implemented in a timely manner to ensure everyday life is not affected.

In regions with mild epidemic risks, officials should organize villagers to put in place all policies and measures on poverty alleviation while ensuring the continuation of epidemic control work, it said.

Resumption of work in key industries a priority

China will give priority to industries that are strong drivers of the economy, such as vehicle manufacturing and electronics, in the resumption of work after suspensions due to the novel coronavirus



outbreak, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said.

Support will also be provided to emerging industries with strategic importance such as 5G and the industrial internet, the ministry said in a guideline issued on Feb 24 on promoting the orderly resumption of work in industrial and telecommunications enterprises.

Efforts will also be made to encourage regions with vehicle purchasing restrictions to increase vehicle quotas appropriately to boost purchases of cars and related products, the guideline said.

The ministry also pledged full efforts to guarantee the production and supply of urgently needed equipment such as respirator machines and electrocardiograph monitors.

