

‘Green drive’ to clean up express delivery sector

Departments pledge to boost promotion of recycling, standardized practices and eco-friendly materials

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The central government has ratcheted up measures to promote green packaging in the express delivery sector by encouraging standardized industry practices, the use of more eco-friendly materials and the development of recycling facilities.

China's mammoth e-commerce sector, which recorded total sales of 10 trillion yuan (\$1.52 trillion) last year, has given rise to a booming express delivery industry, with plastic bags, cardboard boxes and adhesive tape creating a major trash problem.

A guideline published on Dec 14 by eight central government departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission and the State Post Bureau, pledged accelerated efforts to promote the green transformation of the express delivery sector.

Key measures include revisions to laws and regulations in the sector to offer incentives to businesses, and setting unified standards for green packaging to ensure compliance by industry participants.

As part of the green drive, at least 85 percent of packages will only be wrapped one-time by 2022, while 7 million reusable containers will come into use.

To reduce the use of packaging materials and prevent pollution, the government will push forward key measures to gradually halt the use of nondegradable plastic bags, woven bags and adhesive tape.

China's package orders totaled 63.52 billion last year, up 25.3 percent from 2018. It marked the sixth consecutive year that the country has topped the world in the amount of such orders, according to a report issued by the State Post Bureau in October.

The report said that the country's express delivery sector recycled 200 million cardboard boxes last year as part of the green transformation drive.

"It requires a joint effort from the whole industry chain to solve the pollution problem of mailed packages," said Hu Kai, deputy-director of the State Post Bureau's development and research center.

He noted that over 70 percent of package orders are generated by the e-commerce sector, and it is important to ensure e-commerce platforms and businesses can meet their responsibilities on pollution control.

Hu highlighted the need to design and use wrapping materials that can meet logistics companies' demands and enable more products to be mailed without



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having to be packaged a second time by couriers.

The guideline urged quicker steps to devise compulsory standards on hazard-free and recyclable packaging materials and the certification of green packages.

To promote standardized practices in the industry, it pledged to develop packaging that better accommodates the size of goods and ban low-quality materials, such as those that fail to meet standards on heavy metals and solvents.

Express delivery businesses will

be encouraged to boost training of their couriers to improve their skills, while authorities will include inspections of sorting, packaging and delivery in their random checks of businesses.

Lin Ling, a researcher from the China National Institute of Standardization, said "the implementation of the guideline can help shape a more systematic and scientific set of industry standards, thus effectively reducing disputes and improving efficiency."

To bolster the recycling of pack-

aging materials, the guideline said the use of recyclable products will be promoted. Local authorities must develop facilities for the recycling of packages in communities, colleges and business districts, while express delivery branches will also be encouraged to offer recycling services.

Central government finance will extend support to the development of a green logistics and express delivery system as well as professional recycling facilities. The government is also considering giving

green credits to businesses participating in such programs, the guideline said.

Zhu Liyang, president of the China Association of Circular Economy, said the guideline has policy measures that are ready to be implemented and points the way for the green transformation of the sector.

"The latest policies have made clear that couriers and e-commerce businesses must assume the principal responsibilities, a move that will pave the way for the future green development of the sector," he said.

POLICY RESPONSE

Concerns over market access list and healthcare garner response

By MO JINGXI
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A number of central government departments, including those responsible for reform and development, healthcare, natural resources and banking have responded recently to matters of public concern.

Negative list for market access cut to 123 entities

The negative list for market access has been further shortened, with the number of sectors and industries on the list decreasing from 131 last year to 123.

According to the 2020 negative list jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce, 14 regulations were also removed from the list, including qualification recognition for organizations seeking carbon emission assessment and registration licenses for customs declaration enterprises.

The negative list for market access outlines sectors, fields and

businesses that are off-limits for investors. Industries, fields and businesses that are not on the list are open for investment to all market players.

Authorities revise the negative list for market access on an annual basis. Items on the 2020 list shortened from 131 last year and 151 in 2018.

Medical workers urged to pick centers with elder care

Medical workers have been encouraged to practice in institutions that provide integrated medical and elderly services to provide safe and high-quality medical care for the country's older adults, according to a notice published on Dec 14.

The notice, jointly issued by the National Health Commission and the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, called for efforts to improve the quality of services in these institutions.

The notice stressed measures to provide further training and education for both administrative and medical staff working in the institu-

tions to improve their capabilities.

By the end of 2022, a system outlining the standards and assessments of services in institutions that provide integrated medical and elderly services should be basically established, with these institutions' service capability and quality greatly improved, it said.

It also required efforts to advance information construction in these institutions so that the elderly can receive services such as remote diagnosis and treatment guidance and online subsequent visits.

China to finish registering homes for relocated people

China will complete the registration of real estate ownership for resettlement houses involved in the country's poverty alleviation relocation programs in an effort to expand poverty relief achievement, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

To ensure that the rights and interests of relocated people are safeguarded, Zhuang Shaoqin, the vice-minister, said at a news con-



ference on Dec 15 that local authorities are required to speed up the processing of relevant procedures and complete the registration work before the end of next June.

Since 2015, more than 9.6 million rural residents living in inhospitable poor areas have been relocated to around 35,000 newly built residential communities as a result of the country's targeted efforts to eradicate poverty.

No one can refuse to take renminbi cash, bank says

The People's Bank of China said in a notice published on Dec 15 that no entity or individual can refuse to accept renminbi cash, which is the most basic means of

payment in China, and those who won't accept it will be punished.

According to the PBOC, with the wide application of digital services, some merchants and institutions in China are reluctant to accept cash due to a consumer's cost control efforts or technological inexperience, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out.

The PBOC said that it has taken a number of measures to standardize the management of cash, improve the efficiency of its circulation and ensure the rational, safe and smooth use of it by the public.

The innovation of consumption and payment methods should be conducive to protecting people's livelihood and enhancing the public's sense of happiness, it said, noting that non-bank payment institutions must not promote the cashless concept or discriminate against cash payments.

The central bank will investigate and punish firms or individuals that refuse to accept cash or adopt discriminatory measures against such payments, it added.

Policy Digest

Guideline aims to refine social credit system

Authorities will beef up efforts to optimize the mechanism for deterring behavior that causes bad credit and to refine the national social credit system, according to a guideline issued by the General Office of the State Council on Friday.

The endeavor aims to promote the high-quality development of the system, support the reform of government functions and help create a market environment featuring fairness and good credit, it said.

According to the guideline, the scope and procedures of credit information will be formulated in a science-based way. The principles of legality and necessity should be followed when deciding whether, and to what extent, public credit information should be shared and disclosed.

Such decisions will be made clear when compiling the credit information catalog, it said.

To better regulate the list identifying individuals who have committed serious acts that have resulted in bad credit, the guideline required that the list will be limited to those that put public health and safety in grave jeopardy, seriously sabotage fair market competition or disrupt normal social order. The list will not be willfully expanded without authorization.

The guideline also stressed that punishment of bad-credit actions will be enforced in accordance with laws and regulations.

Disciplinary measures taken against entities that have demonstrated serious dishonest behavior, leading to a reduction of their rights or an increase in their duties, will be based on facts and on laws and regulations, it said, adding that punishments should be appropriate and not be added or increased at will.

According to the guideline, a credit repair mechanism, which is conducive to self-correction, should be established, and relevant departments will remove entities who meet credit repair eligibility from the list in a timely manner.

Railway development to be accelerated



China will accelerate the development of urban and sub-urban railways in major city clusters, according to a guideline published by the General Office of the State Council on Thursday.

Such efforts will optimize the layout of urban function, facilitate the coordinated development of cities and towns and expand effective investment, it said.

According to the guideline, preferred areas for construction of the railways include the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circle, the Yangtze River Delta and the middle reaches of the Yangtze, as well as other areas that have financial standing, passenger traffic and development needs.

For newly built lines on inter-city railways, the guideline required that one-way journeys should take no more than one hour, with operating speeds between 100 and 160 kilometers per hour.

The average distance between stations should be no less than 3 km, and the interval between two trains during morning and evening rush hours should not exceed 10 minutes, it added.

To provide better operation services, the guideline also stressed efforts to optimize procedures such as ticket purchasing with support from 5G networks, artificial intelligence and big data.