

POLICY REVIEW



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Policy to promote autonomous driving

Nation targeting breakthroughs in key tech including smart road infrastructure

By XU WEI
xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn

China has mapped out a new set of measures to promote the growth and application of autonomous driving technologies, with steps to bolster the research and development of key technologies and develop more intelligent road infrastructure.

A policy document published by the Ministry of Transport on Wednesday said the country is targeting key breakthroughs in crucial technologies including smart road infrastructure and cooperative systems between vehicle and infrastructure as well as the industrialized application of autonomous driving technologies by 2025.

In stepping up the research and development of technologies, the document pledged to integrate various innovative resources to enable breakthroughs in autonomous driving technologies, such as integrated sensing systems, smart roadside inspection systems and

smart infrastructure.

To improve the level of intelligence in road infrastructure, the government will synergize plans in infrastructure development with the development of smart elements such as sensing networks, communications systems and cloud control systems.

The development of smart infrastructure will be moved forward in an orderly manner, with the interconnectivity of road infrastructure, vehicles, transportation management and services to be promoted, the document said.

Pang Song, head of the department of science and technology with the Ministry of Transport, said in a news release on Wednesday that the policy rollout is part of efforts to enable cutting-edge technologies to empower the transportation sector as autonomous driving technologies could be a precursor to the reshaping of road transportation systems.

Autonomous driving technologies could reduce traffic accidents caused by human factors, improve the traffic

capacity of roads and reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, he said.

Cooperation between carmakers, high-tech companies and telecommunications service providers has spawned a number of startups, which have already offered experimental services in cities including Beijing, Shanghai and Changsha, Hunan province, he noted.

In promoting the piloting of autonomous driving technologies and its application, the official document pledged support to cargo and passenger transportation services via autonomous technologies, saying that the piloting of new business models, such as car-sharing and smart parking services, and their commercial operations will be encouraged.

The government will accelerate steps to create an enabling policy environment, with steps to research the making of rules on operating autonomous driving vehicles and refine regulations on road tests for such vehicles, the document said.

The latest measures have been hailed by industry insiders, with some hailing the document as offering strong confidence in the growth of the sector.

Zhang Haizhou, spokesman of Pony.ai, an autonomous driving startup, said the company welcomes the policy document as it will be a boon for both the sector and its businesses.

"It shows that policymakers have recognized the value of autonomous driving technology in related areas and its safety," he said. "It is our hope that local authorities, under the guidance from the document, can encourage businesses to conduct more in-depth innovative and piloting efforts and quicken steps to roll out more open and pragmatic policy measures, including greenlighting the commercial use of cargo and passenger transportation services and issuing relevant licenses."

UISEE, another startup focused on high-level autonomous driving, said in a news release that the document has outlined a road map for the development of the sector and has delivered a boost to industry insiders.

The policy will expedite steps for businesses to transform, promote their research outcomes and create more commercial value, the company said, adding that the commercialization process of autonomous driving will also pick up under the policy incentives.

Zhang Li — chief operating officer with WeRide, an autonomous driving startup based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province — said the latest document is groundbreaking in that it emphasized the need to encourage the piloting of autonomous technologies.

"Autonomous driving is not a technology that comes out of laboratories. Rather, it requires constant testing on real roads on a massive scale to collect valuable data which, coupled with the iteration of algorithms, can ultimately lead to stable and safe self-driving," he said.

He explained that autonomous driving is a sector that involves multiple disciplines and sectors and no company can single-handedly develop the technology and put it into use, underscoring the importance of integrating resources for breakthroughs in key technologies.

"It not only requires highly strong innovative capacities to tackle technological challenges, such as computer vision, but also the strong productivity and platform of traditional sectors, such as auto making, transportation services and fifth-generation telecommunications services," he said.

POLICY RESPONSE

Push for soccer pitch coverage, SMEs get a leg up

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

A number of ministry-level departments, including those responsible for sport, technologies, finance and market regulation have responded recently to matters of public concern.

All urban areas to have soccer facilities by 2035

All urban communities nationwide will have soccer facilities by 2035, according to a document jointly issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the General Administration of Sport of China on Dec 29.

The announcement follows the success of a pilot construction project in nine cities, including Wuhan, Hubei province, and Shenzhen, Guangdong province, launched in April 2019.

Under the project, the government has built 66 standard football pitches and 713 nonstandard ones in nine cities, said Huang Yan, vice-minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development.



The pitches were established in urban communities, utilizing free spaces such as river banks, beach areas and public parks in cities including Wuhan and Shenzhen, Huang said.

Authorities simplified the process through land approval procedures, and established fundraising methods and long-term management practices to help solve other issues football development faced in communities.

Procurement policy to favor, bolster SMEs

The government is aiming to boost the development of small and medium-sized enterprises through preferential government

procurement policies.

In principle, small-scale procurement projects should all be reserved for SMEs, according to a document jointly issued by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology on Dec 29.

The document clarified and specified a series of supportive measures for SMEs to participate in government procurement.

Data from the Ministry of Finance showed that China's government procurement exceeded 3.3 trillion yuan (\$509 billion) in 2019, equivalent to 10 percent of the country's fiscal expenditures, or 3.3 percent of GDP.

The government procurement contract amount of medium-, small- and micro-sized enterprises exceeded 2.45 trillion yuan in 2019, accounting for 74.1 percent of national government procurement.

Small and medium-sized companies serve as an important foundation for realizing the country's high-quality economic growth.

In 2011, the government issued interim measures to expand its par-

ticipation in government procurement projects.

Corporate credit bond disclosure rules unified

Authorities have unified the rules on information disclosure concerning a company's corporate credit bonds, with the aim of better protecting investors.

On Dec 28, the People's Bank of China, the National Development and Reform Commission and the China Securities Regulatory Commission jointly published the rules, which will take effect on May 1.

In China, companies can issue corporate credit bonds, which include nonfinancial enterprise debt financing instruments, corporate bonds and enterprise bonds, in the interbank market and exchanges. Until now, there have been no unified rules for the three types of bonds regarding information disclosure.

Based on the practice of the domestic market and drawing on international experience, the new rules unify the requirements regarding information disclosure on issues

such as essential documents, content, timing and frequency, according to a statement posted on the website of the PBOC, the central bank.

The rules also make detailed requirements on the contents, structure and formats of bond prospectuses and periodic reports.

Improved regulation of government services

The State Administration for Market Regulation on Dec 28 issued two national standards in order to better regulate government services.

The new standards took effect on Friday.

According to Chen Hongjun, an official with the administration, the standards involve service assessment of government affairs, agencies, platforms and personnel. Services that receive a poor rating will be required to make rectifications.

The administration plans to carry out various training programs online and offline this year to promote the application of the standards so that enterprises and the public can voluntarily rate the quality of government services they receive, Chen said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Policy Digest

Guideline lends support to elderly, child care



China is taking more steps to boost the sound development of elderly care and child care services, including effectively expanding the supply of inclusive services for ordinary families.

According to a guideline issued by the General Office of the State Council on Thursday, the efforts will help improve people's livelihood, enhance the harmony of families and foster new economic drivers.

To establish a policy system that provides accessible elderly care and child care services, the guideline demanded a plan for these sectors in the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25).

The Chinese government will vigorously develop affordable, convenient elderly care and child care services, encourage the engagement of more parties in these sectors and make integrated use of policies in different areas including planning, housing and finance, the guideline said.

For example, the land use for such services will be guaranteed in the annual supply plan of construction land. Local authorities are encouraged to explore the appropriate renovation of houses and facilities in old residential communities affiliated with State-owned enterprises.

Neighborhood and village committees also can be used to offer elderly and child care services, helping families to improve caring abilities, the guideline said, noting that a regular guidance and supervision mechanism over family care should be established.

According to the guideline, the Chinese government will carry out special campaigns to encourage local authorities and enterprises to establish a group of institutions that provide inclusive senior care and child care services.

Charity and social organizations are also encouraged to develop volunteer programs for taking care of children and the elderly, it said.

Registration for pledges of movables improved

China on Friday began implementing unified registration for a system that would make it easier for people and businesses nationwide to borrow money using movable property — such as personal items or other products — for collateral, according to a circular released by the State Council on Dec 29.

The effort to unify the registration of such transactions, called pledges, aims to further improve the business environment and facilitate the financial sector to better serve the real economy, it said.

According to the circular, registration responsibility for pledges of production equipment, raw materials, semi-finished products and product mortgages previously undertaken by the State Administration for Market Regulation; registration responsibility for pledges of accounts receivables, deposits, financial leases; and factoring — in which a company sells its invoices to a third party — by the People's Bank of China will all be assumed by the latter.

Relevant parties will be able to register through a self-service system at the credit reference center of the PBOC, and they will be held accountable for the authenticity, completeness and legality of the application. Registration departments will not conduct substantive review of the registration content, it said.

The circular said that the PBOC should strengthen guidance and supervision over the center, which is not allowed to carry out pre-process reviews.

MO JINGXI