

Measures to boost care for the elderly

Nursing services among key areas to be improved

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China will lower the market access threshold for all nursing home owner-ships, improve community facilities for at-home nursing for the elderly and train more nursing professionals for the sector to expand services and provide more employment opportunities.

Experts said foreign and private investors will have new opportunities as the market for elderly care expands to enhance services and boost quality.

The decision, adopted on Wednesday at an executive meeting of the State Council, presided over by Premier Li Keqiang, was to help meet diverse demands of the increasing number of elderly people in the country, according to a statement.

Four measures were approved at the meeting, including encouraging local authorities to use multiple channels to effectively increase nursing services. Public nursing homes will provide free or low-cost services to those who are in economic difficulties or with only one child.

New residential complexes will install elderly nursing facilities and old complexes will be renovated with such amenities. Professional institutions will be supported to run these facilities. Meanwhile, the training for professional elderly nursing workers will be strengthened.

The meeting also decided to strengthen cross-department supervision, with compulsory national standards on service quality and firefighting facilities to be installed.

Over the years, the elderly population has become an increasingly serious problem for China. Last year, the country had 158.31 million people age 60 or older, while people older than 65 accounted for 11.4 percent of the population, according to the National Statistics Bureau. In 2017, the number of people older than 65 in China went up by 5.5 percent.

The peak is estimated to fall around 2050 when China's elderly population is expected to hit 487 million, which will account for more than one-third of the population.

For Dang Junwu, deputy director of the China Research Center on Aging, the meeting specifically targeted major problems that curbed the development of the elderly nursing sector over the years, such as firefighting facilities.

If properly carried out, these new measures can increase the number of legal nursing institutions as well as the number of elderly people living in these institutions, Dang said. In the next



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step, specific rules should be released on land use, cooperation between hospitals and elderly nursing institutions, and easier medical reimbursement that can help reduce costs for patients, he said.

Dang's viewpoint was echoed by Cao Bingliang, deputy president of the China Silver Industry Association. Cao said China's traditional elderly care is changing in the context of smaller family sizes and an aging population,

which demands diverse services such as at-home nursing.

According to a report released by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2016, the market value for elderly nursing is estimated to be worth 13 trillion yuan (\$1.87 trillion) by 2030.

In 2015, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the National Development and Reform Commission jointly released a guideline to encourage private capital to invest in the elderly nursing market,

including at-home nursing, in-community nursing and professional institutions.

The Ministry of Civil Affairs said that the country had 155,000 elderly nursing institutions and facilities last year, up by 10.6 percent year-on-year. The number of beds climbed to 7.44 million, an increase of 2 percent year-on-year.

However, a five-year plan on elderly nursing, released by the State Council in February last year, pointed out problems such

as an in-balance in elderly services between rural and urban areas, insufficient supply of such services and a shortage of professionals.

Foreign investment can be introduced under the lower market access threshold that will provide increasing opportunities to tap the potential of the Chinese market, Dang said. So far, there are no leading Chinese brands in this field, and foreign companies can work with local partners, he said.

Policy digest

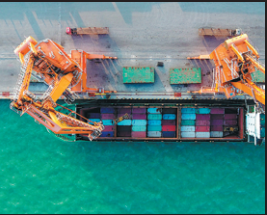
Regional development mechanism to be set up

A mechanism to promote more effective coordinated regional development will be set up, according to a guideline issued on Thursday.

The guideline, jointly released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, has come up with a target to establish a mechanism for coordinated regional development that is compatible with building a moderately prosperous society by 2020, and a new development mechanism that is compatible with its basic modernization by 2035.

It called for efforts to promote the integrated development of the country's major development strategies, such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the coordinated development between the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei cluster and the development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

There will be better coordination for the growth of developed areas and less developed areas. The eastern provincial areas will prioritize reform and innovation, the transformation between new



and traditional growth engines as well as regional integration. For the less-developed areas in the west, the country will speed up efforts to improve the weak links such as infrastructure, public service, ecology and environment as well as industry development, the guideline said.

The guideline also requires coordinated development between land and marine sectors, with more endeavors set to be made to repair ecology along coastal areas and step up control over land reclamation.

The free flow of elements between urban and rural areas will be further promoted to better the business environment and stimulate market vitality. A unified negative list system for the market will be implemented

nationwide, and regional market barriers will be eliminated, the guideline said.

It also called for increased coordination between fiscal, monetary and investment policies to support inter-regional projects in transport, water conservancy and environmental protection.

The country will actively conduct international regional cooperation by giving full play to cooperative mechanisms such as the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the guideline said.

Evaluation will enhance business environment

An evaluation system for the business environment will be established, according to a statement released after a State Council executive meeting presided over by Premier Li Keqiang on Wednesday.

The importance of bettering the business environment for promoting high-quality development was highlighted at the meeting. Endeavors will be made to better align with advanced international

standards, tackle areas of major weakness and vigorously pursue reform and opening-up, the statement said.

A system for evaluating the business environment in China that is comparable to international criteria will be set up in alignment with World Bank standards. The assessment will focus on areas as closely related to market participants, including starting a business, getting a construction permit, obtaining a loan, paying taxes, going through bankruptcy procedures and protecting intellectual property rights, the statement said.

The evaluation will be carried out across the country in due course, and local authorities and departments will be encouraged to come up with more solid measures



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POLICY RESPONSE

Bohai Sea, swine fever discussed

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Several ministry-level departments, including those for ecology and environment, education, and agriculture and rural affairs, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Maritime pollution tackled

The environmental watchdog said on Friday that it will adopt a variety of measures to fight against pollution and protect the ecology and environment of the Bohai Sea area.

Ke Chang, a senior official from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, said the campaign against pollution will be conducted on four fronts; namely, addressing pollution sources on land, curbing pollution from maritime activities, restoring the maritime ecological environment and preventing environmental risks.

The campaign will target rivers and outfalls flowing into the Bohai Sea, factories, pollution from rural residents and agriculture, and urban sewage. Pollution from mariculture, vessels and ports will also be targeted, he told a news conference.

The government will adopt rigorous rules to control sea reclamation and coastline development projects. It will carry out environmental risks assessments and law enforcement inspections to wipe out major risks to the maritime environment.

The government will also establish an early warning and emergency response system against red and green tides.

Swine fever coordination call

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has called for greater coordination between Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province to control and prevent the spread of African swine fever.

Yu Kangzhen, vice-minister of agriculture and rural affairs, said at a work conference on Nov 27 that the risks for the spread of the fever cannot be ignored as the country is still faced with a challenging situation of disease control.

Authorities from Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei should unify their leadership over disease control and prevention and increase information connectivity and coordination in measures, he said.

He also called for better emergency responses to improve prevention and joint efforts from the three provincial areas for law enforcement.

The Agriculture Ministry said last month that it has confirmed African swine fever on two farms in Beijing, the first cases in the Chinese capital. The disease was detected on two farms in the municipality's Fangshan district.

Kindergarten numbers in focus

The Ministry of Education said on Nov 28 that it will increase the percentage of public kindergartens among preschool institutions so that more children can enjoy inclusive preschool education services.

Lyu Yugang, an official with the department of elementary education with the ministry, said in a news conference on Nov 28 that authorities will inspect unlicensed kindergartens, certify those that are qualified and suspend or close those that fail to meet safety or hygiene standards.

Those found with "excessive profit-seeking behaviors" in establishing or operating kindergartens will be strictly curbed, he said.

Public kindergartens took up 44.1 percent of the country's total kindergartens in 2017, according to the ministry.

Online system to help IPR fight

An online trademark service system has been launched as part of efforts to better protect intellectual property rights, the National Intellectual Property Administration announced on Nov 27.

The online system, which is upgraded from the trademark application system, will integrate one-stop services including trademark inquiry, application, announcements, online payment and registration publicity, according to the administration.

Shen Changyu, head of the administration, said the launch of the online system is an important step to facilitate trademark registration and to build a trademark service system with high efficiency and transparency.

He noted that the registration and review of intellectual property rights are key parts of IPR protection, and the authority will continue to improve the mechanism and its services.

Efforts have also been made to fast-track the trademark registration process, and the average trademark review cycle had shortened to less than six months as of November.

The country has seen a growing number of applications for trademark in recent years. Trademark applications in China reached around 6 million from January to October, up by 36.4 percent year-on-year, according to the authority.