

# POLICY REVIEW

## Policies tackle surging youth unemployment

Rise in joblessness among under-24s due to changing international landscape, pandemic, and cyclical factors

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China has been working hard to stabilize the job market, prioritizing employment for young people, many of whom are struggling as a result of rising unemployment created by economic uncertainty and the increase in the number of college graduates.

Together with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security recently released a policy designed to encourage employers to hire fresh college graduates and the registered unemployed youth through the promise of a special allowance.

Under the policy, employers willing to sign contracts with either unemployed college students who have graduated within the past two years or young, registered jobless workers age between 16 and 24, will receive a one-time 1,500 yuan (\$207) allowance for each young person they hire until the end of December.

Employers must make certain payments, such as pension and workmen's compensation insurance, to newly-hired workers for at least a month before applying for the allowance.

Additionally, human resource bureaus have been asked to streamline administrative procedures for reviewing applications for the allowance, and should pay employers within 30 days of verifying eligibility.

Supervision of the issue and use of the special employment allowance is to be stepped up, and provincial human resources departments are required to report the amounts they have paid out to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security each month to prevent fraud.

This is just one of a number of policies designed to invigorate the job market as a whole, especially when it comes to the employment of those aged between 16 and 24, and requires governmental vigilance. The unemployment rate among this demographic rose to 20.8 percent in May, up from 20.4 percent in April, and an increase of 2.4 percentage points year-on-year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The NBS said that as of May, there were around 96 million people aged between 16 and 24, 33 million of whom have finished education and entered the job market. "Among these 33 million, about six million are still looking for work," NBS spokesman Fu Linghui told a recent news conference.

The human resources ministry began to launch a series of policies to encourage the employment of young people early last month to coincide with the annual graduation period. The number of new college graduates reached 11.58 million this year, an increase of 1.67 million on last year.

The ministry kicked off a 100-day campaign on June 6 to find 10 million jobs for college graduates and jobseekers. Another employment campaign launched by the ministry



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that has been underway since late June aims to help college graduates and registered unemployed youth find as many jobs as possible in the five-month period until the end of December.

This latter campaign gives unemployed graduates one employment policy introduction, one career guidance session, three job recommendations and a skill training course or internship. In addition, customized job services will be available to young people who have been out of work for a significant period of time, to further invigorate the job market.

Mao Yufei, an associate professor at the School of Labor Economics at the Capital University of Economics and Business, said that there is a disparity between the increasing number of college graduates and decreasing demand for them from employers, and that the country has entered a critical period during which company confidence needs to be boosted and people encouraged

to spend more to relieve downward economic pressure, which is one of the factors limiting demand from employers.

He said that teachers and government officials should encourage college students who remain unemployed because they haven't received a satisfactory job offer, by providing them with a clear analysis of the current job market, as well as the pros and cons of having a job.

"There are some students with the will to work who are making every effort to find a job but have failed to do so because they lack work experience or skills. Colleges should encourage these students to accept internships to improve their skills. We should also show due respect and understanding for another group of students who are preparing to take the civil servant examinations, and who are missing out on job opportunities and the job-seeking season," he added.

Pang Shi, director of the Chinese

Academy of Personnel Science's department of employment and entrepreneurship said that the high youth unemployment rate must be viewed objectively.

"We should face up to the rising youth unemployment rate, which is a result of greater numbers, as well as the problems arising from the influence of cyclical unemployment, structural unemployment and frictional unemployment. Youth employment is a common global problem. It's not unusual to see a higher youth unemployment rate, which is sometimes two or three times the national average, in other countries and regions," she said.

"The youth employment problem has deepened in recent years as the result of changes to the international landscape, the pandemic, and industrial changes and adjustments. A recent report by the International Labor Organization said that the global youth unemploy-

ment level reached 73 million last year, a rise of six million from 2019, before COVID-19 hit."

Pang added that the youth employment problem is the result of economic cycles, the imbalance between supply and demand between the youth labor force and the market, and also results from the career outlooks of the young.

"The fundamental way to solve the youth employment problem is to develop the economy and create more stable job opportunities, and to ensure that jobseekers match with job vacancies. The large number of private companies are an important means of stabilizing the national economy, and are also the country's main employers. So the government can encourage private companies to create job opportunities by offering them preferential policies and reducing information asymmetry between companies and college students to better connect both sides," Pang added.

### Policy Digest

#### Measures are taken to safeguard crop harvest

In conjunction with three other central government bodies, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs has issued a notice asking regions to work hard to tackle flooding, drought and other forms of extreme weather to guarantee the autumn crop harvest.

The notice, which was issued by the Ministry of Water Resources, the Ministry of Emergency Management and the China Meteorological Administration, urges local authorities to understand the importance of the task.

Authorities are to provide more detailed weather forecasts and disaster alerts, and must ensure that counties and villages receive the forecasts and alerts in time.

Local agricultural authorities are to offer technical guidance to farmers to prevent, or to reduce potential loss from natural disasters, and water resource authorities are to run projects in a scientific manner to both minimize the harm presented by flooding, and to store sufficient water to deal with droughts.

Emergency management authorities are to prepare disaster relief supplies and must respond to disasters in a timely manner, while meteorological authorities should also issue alerts in time and run weather modification projects when appropriate, the notice stated.

#### NEV registration rises in first half of this year

More than 3.12 million new energy vehicles were registered in China in the first half of this year, marking a year-on-year increase of 41.6 percent, according to the Ministry of Public Security.

The number of NEVs in the country stood at 16.2 million by the end of June, accounting for 4.9 percent of all automobiles.

Additionally, 11.7 million new automobiles were registered in the first half of this year, marking a 5.8 percent year-on-year increase.

As many as 88 cities are now home to over a million automobiles. Beijing and Chengdu have more than 6 million automobiles each, while Chongqing, Shanghai and Suzhou have more than 5 million each.

China is also home to an active trade in used automobiles.

#### Better protection of cultural heritage urged

Local authorities in charge of cultural heritage must strengthen efforts to protect sites during the upcoming flood season, the National Cultural Heritage Administration said.

In a notice released earlier this month, the administration said that authorities, as well as cultural heritage sites and museums, should consult with local departments of emergency management, meteorology and water resources to assess the potential risk posed by flooding.

They should examine locations such as archaeological excavation sites, as well as immovable cultural heritage, including bridges, city walls, wooden architecture and grottoes, to uncover and address any dangers, and take measures to ward off the threat of flooding, among other requirements.

#### Baselines set for orderly urban regeneration

The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development has issued a notice for the promotion of orderly urban regeneration, setting baselines that are not to be crossed.

The notice states that small-scale and gradual urban regeneration projects are encouraged, and urges local authorities to avoid mass demolition and construction.

Local authorities should also not change place names that have been used for a long time or which have historical significance at will, nor should they arbitrarily move or demolish historical buildings.

The ministry urged authorities to respect nature and avoid damaging natural landscapes during the process of urban regeneration.

It stressed the importance of safety, tasking local authorities with renovating dilapidated buildings and aging gas pipelines.

WANG QINGYUN

## Young are more tempted by flexible and newly emerged jobs

By CHENG SI

Many young Chinese are considering newly emerged and flexible jobs at a time when employers are offering less-tempting payment due to the higher pressure of running businesses during the current economic downturn.

A recent report produced by the recruitment portal Zhaopin shows that the average new recruit's salary in the second quarter of this year in 38 major cities like Beijing and Shanghai experienced slight growth of 1.6 percent over the previous quarter, rising to an average of around 10,266 yuan (\$1,422) per month. However, this figure is down 0.7 percent on the same peri-

od last year due to operating pressures and reduced company budgets.

Among the 38 cities, Shanghai continues to occupy the top slot with a monthly salary of 13,486 yuan, followed by Beijing at 13,438 yuan per month and Shenzhen in Guangdong at 12,774 yuan per month.

According to the report, sectors including funds and securities, banking and electronic technologies are currently offering the highest salaries. For example, insurance companies are offering an average monthly salary of 11,269 yuan.

Given less-tempting recruitment salaries, more young people are showing a preference for flexible

jobs, or newly emerged jobs such as street vending, volunteering at temples.

In another report, Zhaopin revealed that 18.9 percent of those surveyed in the second quarter have already taken a flexible job and 51.1 percent are considering doing so. The size of the sample surveyed was not revealed.

What is noteworthy is that some new forms of employment are emerging as favorite choices, including working as a street vendor, or as a temple volunteer, while among those with rural background, returning home to farm is also emerging as a popular choice.

"I'm getting tired of so-called 'modern life', where I work 9 am to 9

pm six days a week. I earn money but I don't have time to spend it," said Sun Yiqian, a 29-year-old communications engineer in Beijing, who is considering becoming a part-time street vendor if she quits her job.

"I've had a stall at night markets with my friends selling accessories and it makes me happy and relaxed. I'm considering quitting, maybe next month, and starting my own business running a street stall," she said.

Yao Xin is yet to decide whether to find a steady or a flexible job, when she finishes postgraduate studies in Beijing next June.

"I've interned at some companies as a human resources assistant and

as a marketing department assistant, and it was very stressful. My parents want me to be a teacher, which is a steady job, but I want to be a freelancer or new media content creator. I still have a year to consider my future," the 24-year-old said.

At a recent news conference in Beijing, Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said that young people have greatly changed their career outlook over the last five to 10 years, as they now have many other options, such as taking a flexible job. "We promote a positive career outlook through which young people understand society and create their own value through practice and employment," he said.