CHINA

Job stability key to hiking social security

Experts say strong policies may boost insurance coverage for flexible workers

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Experts have called for collaborative efforts from government, online platforms and society to improve social insurance coverage for people in new forms of employment — such as ride-hailing drivers and food delivery workers — to better safeguard their livelihoods.

Earlier in December, the annual Central Economic Work Conference held in Beijing clarified that flexible workers and people in new forms of employment are encouraged to enroll in the regular employees' social insurance program. According to the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, there are more than 200 million flexible workers nationwide.

Even before the latest policy signals, several major internet companies, particularly in the food delivery sector, had begun exploring ways to improve social insurance coverage by offering subsidies linked to workers' own insurance contributions.

Chinese e-commerce platform JD announced in March 2025 that its full-time food delivery workforce was covered by the mandatory "five insurance and one fund" system for regular employees — including pension, medical, unemployment, work-related injury and maternity insurance, as well as the housing fund. The program has about 150,000 full-time delivery workers registered on the platform.

In April 2025, food delivery platform Meituan also launched a pilot pension insurance subsidy program in Quanzhou, Fujian province, and Nantong, Jiangsu province. In line with the program, Meituan offers insurance subsidies to workers who choose to participate in social insurance, work for the platform for a minimum of six months, and earn incomes above local minimum contribution base for at least three months.

A group of Meituan delivery workers in Nantong received their first pension insurance subsidies — about 490 yuan ($70) — in May after joining the program the previous month, according to Workers' Daily.

However, some experts noted that workers' relative reluctance to join social insurance programs — due to unstable incomes, financial pressures and uncertain career plans — as well as the financial burden on platforms, poses challenges to expanding coverage.

"Many flexible workers and people in new forms of employment believe that paying insurance contributions will reduce their take-home income," said Li Chang'an, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics' Academy of China Open Economy Studies.

"Delivery workers, for example, often have unstable career plans and may change jobs frequently, which leads to a lack of continuity in insurance contributions." Li added that social insurance relies on contributions from both workers and employers, which can create additional financial pressure on both sides.

Feng Shuaizhang, dean of the Institute for Economic and Social Research at Jinan University in Guangdong province, said insufficient flexibility in contribution mechanisms, limited awareness of the importance of social insurance, and a lack of understanding of relevant policies also contribute to low participation among workers in new forms of employment.

"To increase their willingness to participate, the government should improve job quality and strengthen long-term rights protection to enhance job stability," Feng said, adding that fair market competition must be ensured so employers and platforms are encouraged to pay taxes and can steadily contribute to workers' social insurance.

Li praised recent exploratory measures by internet companies and the government to strengthen social security protection for flexible workers, but said authorities could further improve insurance mechanisms and introduce stronger supportive policies, such as tax reductions, to boost participation by both employers and workers.

In December, the State Council submitted a report on safeguarding the rights of flexible workers and people in new forms of employment to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress for review. The report said expanding social insurance coverage for these workers remains a key priority, with plans to make contribution mechanisms more flexible and inclusive.

Ice climbing



Climbing enthusiasts compete during an ice climbing event at Huangyuan's Daheigou scenic area in Xining, Qinghai province, on Sunday. The competition draws dozens of participants from different professions, highlighting the growing popularity of winter sports. ZHANG LONG / XINHUA

17 rescued Filipino sailors handed over

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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After more than two days of search and rescue efforts, the China Coast Guard successfully transferred 17 rescued Filipino crew members to the Philippines on Sunday afternoon.

The crew was pulled from the water after their cargo ship capsized near China's Huangyan Island on Thursday night. Two of the 17 rescued people have died and four others remain missing.

At 1:34 am on Friday, the CCG received notification from the maritime search and rescue center of Sansha, Hainan province, stating that a foreign cargo ship had capsized 55 nautical miles northwest of Huangyan Island, carrying 21 Filipino crew members. The CCG immediately dispatched two vessels, the *Dongsha* and *Sanmen*, to begin search and rescue operations.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command also responded swiftly, mobilizing resources and arranging military aircraft for continuous aerial searches over the affected waters.

Upon arrival, the rescue vessels quickly demarcated search zones and conducted thorough inspections using radar scanning, full-area searchlight illumination, and high-frequency communication calls. Hours later, rescuers spotted several individuals floating and transferred them onto the coast guard ships.

On board, CCG medical personnel promptly provided survivors with water and items to keep warm. For those suffering from water aspiration, abrasions, and dehydration, professional treatments, including respiratory tract clearance, wound disinfection and bandaging, and vital sign monitoring, were administered.

A severely ill crew member received emergency care, and a dedicated rest area was set up, with warm porridge and drinking water provided. Through interpreters, the crew remained calm and expressed gratitude to the CCG.

"We are happy to be rescued. Thank you very much, China Coast Guard," said a rescued crew member.

Once the Philippine Coast Guard vessel 9701 arrived at the scene, it took part in the sector-by-sector search and rescue operations. By noon on Friday, a total of 17 people had been rescued, with 15 in stable condition and two deceased. At the Philippine side's request, the CCG handed over the rescued on Sunday afternoon.

This operation exemplifies the CCG's regular maritime emergency response work. The CCG has previously rescued distressed foreign personnel on multiple occasions, earning widespread international recognition. In May 2025, a CCG vessel rescued eight South Korean fishermen whose boat encountered trouble at sea.

'Beijing Rocket Street': A launchpad for accelerated development

By **YANG CHENG**
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The Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, or E-Town, has rolled out projects and shared infrastructure to boost the commercial aerospace industry, measures that officials say will help private companies cut costs, accelerate satellite and rocket production, and strengthen industrial collaboration.

The announcement came on Friday at a conference in the area, which brought together local officials, experts and scholars, aerospace institutes, private space companies, and international guests.

Authorities unveiled nine major production-capacity projects, six satellite programs, and six industrial platforms under the "Beijing Rocket Street" initiative.

China's commercial aerospace sector has grown rapidly. In 2025, the country conducted 50 commercial space launches, more than half of all missions that year, and placed 311 commercial satellites into orbit, representing 84 percent of the total.

"Commercial aerospace has progressed across the full industrial chain, from research and development to satellite launches, tracking and control, and downstream applications," said Zhang Rusheng, deputy director of the commercial aerospace department at the China National Space Administration. He added that Beijing, as a global innovation hub, is increasingly shaping the sector's development.

As launch frequency and satellite deployment accelerate, officials said the focus is now shifting from scale to efficiency.

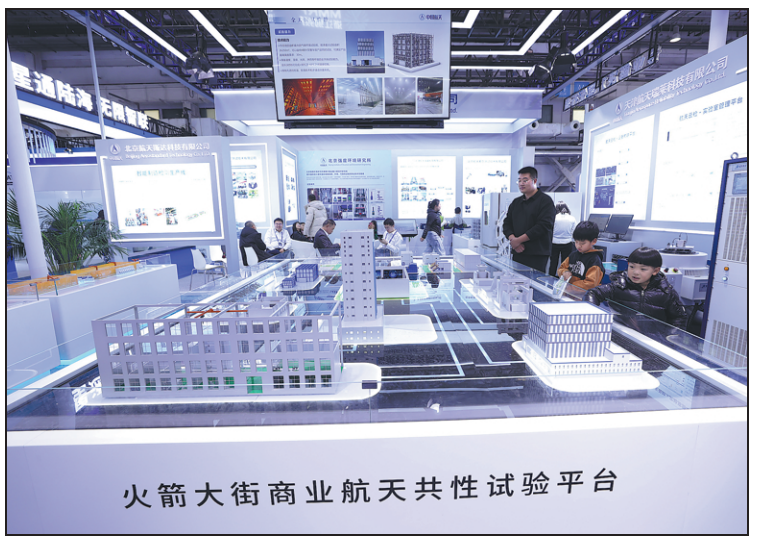
Fragmented resources, repeated investment in testing facilities and pressure on infrastructure have emerged as key challenges, particularly for private companies.

Beijing's response centers on shared infrastructure.

And the flagship Beijing Rocket Street project embodies this methodology. Covering 145,000 square meters, it is described as China's first shared commercial aerospace research and production base.

The project has completed final inspections and is entering the delivery and operational phase.

The site is divided into four functional zones: a common technology platform, an innovation and research center, a high-end manufacturing center, and a display and operations control center. Together, they offer more than 10 shared services, including vibration, thermal vacuum and separation testing for rockets and satellites.



Visitors view a model of the Beijing Rocket Street commercial aerospace at the 2026 Beijing International Commercial Space Exhibition in E-Town, on Saturday. CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"This initiative is designed to expand industrial development space and strengthen industry support with shared platforms," said Ma Zhao, deputy director at the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area's robotics and intelligent manufacturing industry bureau. "By doing so, we aim to release new productive capacity while boosting confidence across the industry."

Beijing's E-Town has become one of China's most concentrated commercial aerospace clusters. Rockets developed in the area carried out 24 launches in 2025, representing more than 90 percent of China's commercial rocket missions, according to the E-Town authorities.

Enterprises noted the importance of the shared infrastructure and targeted services in the area.

Xia Dongkun, vice-president of Galactic Energy, a leading commercial aerospace company with R&D bases in E-Town, highlighted the benefits of policies regarding talent, investment, and insurance.

The shared platforms enhance synergy between upstream and downstream industries, improving efficiency and financial capabilities.

Galaxy Space, another industry leader, values the cutting-edge industrial foundation in the area, such as intelligent driving and embodied intelligent robots, said Liu Chang, the company's co-founder.

The company plans to build a factory in E-Town with an annual production capacity of 500 satellites, making it China's largest facility for mass production of low Earth orbit satellites, utilizing a lot of automated equipment, she added.

Ma said E-Town will continue focusing on reusable rockets, satellite internet, future space technologies, and new infrastructure. The area aims to attract up to 1,000 companies, support more than 1,000 commercial rocket launches, and generate hundreds of billions of yuan in revenue, consolidating Beijing's position as a national center for high-quality commercial aerospace development.

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Capital city targets 5% GDP growth for 2026

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Beijing has set an ambitious goal for 2026, aiming for a GDP growth of more than 5 percent after becoming one of two Chinese cities to reach a GDP of 5 trillion yuan ($717 billion) in 2025, Mayor Yin Yong said on Sunday.

Delivering the government work report during the city's annual two sessions, Yin said Beijing will deepen coordinated development with Tianjin and Hebei province and push science and technology innovation to new heights in 2026, the first year of the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026–30).

Statistics show that 689 companies relocated from Beijing to register in the Binhai-Zhongguancun science park last year in Tianjin's Binhai New Area. The transaction value of technology contracts exported from Beijing to Tianjin and Hebei reached 99.6 billion yuan, up 18.1 percent during that period.

Significant breakthroughs were made in key industrial sectors such as biopharmaceuticals, and construction of a new energy vehicle eco-port was launched in the region.

"This year, we will focus on improving the efficiency of the regional technological innovation mechanism," Yin said. "We will roll out a series of initiatives to take the lead in basic research and tackle key core technologies, strengthening strategic scientific and technological forces such as national laboratories in Beijing."

New research and innovation platforms will be established in areas that include brain-computer interfaces and high-temperature superconductors, he said.

Looking ahead, Beijing plans to further strengthen local innovation infrastructure and advance research in key areas such as Zhongguancun, the city's flagship science park, which will prioritize development of the artificial intelligence sector. The Huairou National Comprehensive Science Center will promote high-end scientific equipment manufacturing, while the accelerated development of the Nankou and Machikou national-level key centers and a science town in Changping district is expected to improve the transfer of industrial achievements.

Lin Jianhua, deputy director of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform, said Beijing is launching an "AI Plus" initiative to expand the role of artificial intelligence in supporting sectors including quantum technology, commercial aerospace and biopharmaceuticals.

"This will foster new engines of industrial growth," Lin said.

Quality-of-life improvements were also in the spotlight in Beijing last year, and new supportive measures for the elderly are expected to be announced during the two sessions this week.

Li Fengqin, a member of the Beijing Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and director of the Shijingshan district medical insurance bureau, shared a story during the sessions highlighting the impact of improved government services.

An elderly man in his late 60s made a special trip last year to present a banner of gratitude to the bureau, Li said.

"With tears in his eyes, he held my hand tightly and told me how his mother, who was over 90 and had been unable to bathe for more than four years because of her disability, finally received help," Li said.

The district's long-term care insurance agency, equipped with professional tools, had visited the family's home and resolved the problem, allowing the elderly woman to live with greater dignity. Li said she could truly feel the helplessness the man had experienced before.

The long-term care insurance program, often described as a "sixth type" of social insurance, was designed to address China's rapidly aging population. The program has been piloted in the Shijingshan district for six years and is expected to expand to more regions in Beijing and across China.