

## CHINA

# Policy pushes expansion of social work

Nation moves to boost professional services tackling aging and rural gaps

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China has unveiled a high-level policy document aimed at expanding the role of professional social workers in addressing complex social issues — ranging from bridging the urban-rural divide and managing demographic challenges to providing employment support for gig workers.

The document, titled "Opinions on Promoting the Construction of the Social Work Professional Personnel Team", was jointly issued by the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council.

Dated March 1 and made public over the weekend, it described professional social workers as key to connecting with and serving the people, as well as in safeguarding and improving their livelihoods.

To bolster talent supply, the document outlines plans to establish professional standards for social workers in key areas, including community and rural governance, elderly care, child welfare, employment services, and support for gig economy workers.

It has set a goal to make the structure and distribution of social workers more rational within five years, sharply increase the number of high-level professionals, and steadily expand the number of specialized positions.

Under the document, governments at various levels will be encouraged to develop new service models to generate more jobs in the sector, positioning social work as a growing field for employment.

Authorities will also encourage businesses to create social work positions and support public-funded agencies in hiring social workers. In a Q&A session published on Saturday, a senior official from the Society Work Department of CPC Central Committee described the document as a significant step in supporting the long-term development of the social work sector and professionalizing public service and social governance.

"The new era and new journey have set a higher bar for the development of the professional social work workforce," the official said, explaining the rationale behind the policy.

The opinions focus on several priorities, including training, recruitment, evaluation, and incen-

tives for social work professionals. Under the plan, China will expand professional training programs and improve the continuing education system for current workers.

It will also strengthen university-level social work education and increase the share of practical, hands-on teaching.

To address regional imbalances, the government will "actively guide social work professionals to carry out services in rural areas, central and western regions, border areas, and ethnic regions", according to the document.

It also calls for integrating social work into the country's "population development support and service system", especially as China faces the dual pressures of an aging population and declining birth rates.

The plan identifies schools and medical institutions as pioneering areas for expanding social work services. The document also highlights support for China's rapidly growing gig economy, urging social workers to "proactively provide services to new employment groups".

The evaluation system for social workers will be overhauled to emphasize practical performance and service-user satisfaction, the document said.

The document suggests that long-serving professionals working at the grassroots level or in hardship areas will be eligible for pay raises. "Social workers who have spent years working at the grassroots level or in remote, tough areas and delivered strong results will get policy support as outlined," the official said.

A credibility system will also be introduced, incorporating integrity pledges and penalties for dishonest behavior.

The new policy comes as China seeks to strengthen social governance and respond to the needs of its population amid rapid social and economic transformation.

The document also aligns with the broader goals outlined in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, which was approved on Thursday by the National People's Congress, the nation's top legislature. The plan emphasizes the need to improve social work systems and regulations, strengthen the professional workforce, and raise specialized service standards to advance the modernization of social governance.



## Spring job fair

Job seekers crowd a large spring job fair at the China Import and Export Fair Complex in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Sunday. Nearly 2,000 companies offered more than 85,000 positions, attracting over 150,000 applicants.

DENG HUA / XINHUA

## Understanding nation's plan key to HK's growth

By OSWALD CHAN in Hong Kong  
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The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region must understand the macro-planning of the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), and through better integration, the SAR will be able to unleash greater growth potential, Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said in his Sunday blog.

"As a special administrative region of the country, Hong Kong must continue to understand deeply and learn from the ideas of the 15th Five-Year Plan. Only by understanding the macro-planning can we better integrate into it," Chan said.

"By combining Hong Kong's own characteristics, including the institutional advantages of 'one country, two systems', the common law system, internationalization, the gathering of high-quality enterprises and high-end talent, and the func-

tions of an international financial center, Hong Kong will be able to unleash greater growth potential," he said.

The finance chief added: "Hong Kong boasts world-class financial markets and professional services, providing stronger support for accelerating the development of a modern industrial system and promoting the deep integration of technological and industrial innovation."

He said the SAR government must accelerate efforts to promote full-chain financing, intellectual property financing, testing and certification, and technology services tailored to the needs of technology companies.

Regarding promoting coordinated regional development, Chan said it is also important for the SAR to further develop concrete and feasible measures with sister cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao

Greater Bay Area in areas such as rule alignment, mechanism integration, and facilitating the convenient cross-border flow of innovative elements.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu previously said the preparatory groups set up earlier by various bureaus have been converted into formulation teams for alignment with the 15th Five-Year Plan, which will work full speed to complete the Hong Kong five-year plan this year.

"With a clear shared objective, the policy bureaus cooperate and coordinate with each other to formulate comprehensive action plans. We must adhere to the combination of an effective government and an efficient market, break through traditional thinking, be bold to innovate and be determined to reform, implement the work with a proactive and pragmatic attitude," Chan said.

The annual plenary sessions of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (known collectively as two sessions) concluded last week. The fourth session of the 14th National People's Congress approved the 15th Five-Year Plan, which sets forth a blueprint and action plan for the country's socioeconomic development over the next five years.

The outlines gave precise directions regarding optimizing and upgrading traditional industries, cultivating and expanding emerging industries, forward-looking planning for future industries, and high-quality and efficient development of the service sector. Furthermore, the plan highly prioritized strengthening original innovation and tackling key core technologies to accelerate high-level technological self-reliance.

## Authorities intensify crackdown on counterfeit goods

By YANG ZEKUN  
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Ahead of the 44th World Consumer Rights Day on Sunday, China's top court and top procuratorate released new model cases on consumer rights protection and the punishment of crimes involving counterfeit and substandard goods, underscoring the country's continued tough stance on such offenses.

Data from the Supreme People's Procuratorate showed that in 2025, procuratorial organs nationwide approved the arrest of 5,745 suspects in cases involving the production and sale of fake or substandard goods, and prosecuted 18,376 people.

Prosecutors also intensified efforts to protect food and drug safety. In 2025, they brought charges in 5,026 food-related criminal cases involving 9,595 people and 2,135 drug-related cases involving 4,043 people.

In one case released by the SPP, a man surnamed Liu from Jiangsu province set up two companies

between June 2021 and July 2023 to produce and sell snacks containing illegal additives. He purchased additives with laxative effects for use in food processing, while the other two managed daily operations and handled storage and distribution.

The products were sold through e-commerce platforms to more than 20 provincial-level regions across China, generating more than 26 million yuan (\$3.77 million) in sales. In March 2025, the three were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 11 years and six months to five years and six months, along with fines, for producing and selling toxic and harmful food.

The SPP said prosecutors will continue to trace the full upstream and downstream industrial chain behind counterfeit and substandard goods and move to dismantle criminal networks. It added that procuratorial authorities will strengthen coordination with relevant agencies, improve links between administrative enforcement and criminal

justice, and better protect consumers' lawful rights and interests.

The Supreme People's Court also released a batch of typical consumer rights protection cases. In one case, a consumer paid more than 2,000 yuan for a weight-loss product sold online and later discovered that the company named in its promotional material had lost its business license more than a decade earlier. The case was reported to the police, and a suspect surnamed Zhang was later placed under criminal investigation in a separate case for allegedly producing and selling toxic and harmful food.

Tests found that the product contained large amounts of prohibited ingredients. The court held that Zhang had sold food that failed to meet safety standards and supported the consumer's claim for punitive damages equal to 10 times the purchase price. Zhang was ordered to pay more than 20,000 yuan.

The SPC said creating a safe, fair and trustworthy legal environment for consumption remains one of its

key responsibilities. It said the people's court will continue to respond to evolving consumer expectations and rights protection needs, with a focus on online consumption, emerging sectors, and food and drug safety, while issuing timely judicial rules to promote standardized development.

Separately, the State Administration for Market Regulation and the Ministry of Public Security have launched a nationwide joint enforcement campaign against fraud in the traditional crafts market, targeting fake certificates, fake institutions, fake products and fake websites in sectors such as jewelry and jade, precious metal ornaments and rosewood products.

The campaign comes amid widespread misconduct, including forged or altered inspection reports, the sale of such reports, false marketing using fake certificates, and the passing off of inferior goods as premium products. It aims to strengthen regulation at both the systemic and source levels and crack down on industry abuses.



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