

Guangdong plans to facilitate sharing of data in bay area

Authorities to set up special zone for transfer of information amid push to build national AI hub

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Authorities in Guangdong province want to facilitate data transfers across the Greater Bay Area as part of a broader plan to make the region a national artificial intelligence (AI) hub, according to new guidelines.

The provincial government would accelerate the establishment of a "Digital Bay Area" by looking at two-way, cross-border transfers of data and building a "special data zone" in the region, according to guidelines released by local authorities yesterday.

The special zone in the Greater Bay Area, which linked Hong Kong, Macau and nine cities in Guangdong, was aimed at addressing blockages in the industrial chain as well as the sharing of data within the region, documents published by Guangdong province showed.

The plans would leverage the advantages of Hong Kong and Macau in establishing the rules and mechanisms for data transfers and creating the infrastructure for data storage, sharing and transaction services in a compliant way, the guidelines said.

The measures are part of the province's plan to rank first in intelligent computing power by 2025, with a relatively comprehensive innovation system in general AI and expanded scenarios for high-level AI applications.

Guangdong also aims to build a 300 billion yuan (HK\$321.6 billion) AI industry by 2025 with more than 2,000 enterprises, becoming a national innovation leader in general AI and a computing hub.

The move comes as Beijing pushes ahead with policies to ratchet up the country's AI efforts following the success of US start-up OpenAI's ChatGPT service, which is currently not available in the world's second-biggest economy.

In May, President Xi Jinping urged the country to leverage AI developments to modernise the industrial sector, and Beijing has plans to set up a raft of regional AI "highlands" and related tech platforms across the country.

¥300b

Guangdong province plans to build an AI industry worth this much, in yuan, by 2025 involving more than 2,000 enterprises

In the Guangdong plan, the government will push for the establishment of high-quality Chinese-language data sets for the AI industry and support data transfers among different areas and industries.

It has also pledged to build firewalls, enhance data security and create a data classification and protection system.

The Guangdong guidelines follow a data transfer deal between the Cyberspace Administration of China and the Hong Kong government announced in June.

Last month, the Hong Kong government also announced plans for a pilot programme for cross-border data transfers with a focus on commonly used data such as personal health records, banking details and customer information.