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HIGH-WIRE ACT

RIVER CROSSING THAT PUT
FOCUS ON PLIGHT OF POOR
SOCIETY, PAGE 2

OUTLOOK POSITIVE

SHORTENED NEGATIVE LIST
OPENS MORE DOORS
BUSINESS, PAGE 3

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Opening-up continues to pay dividends

Foreign companies once used to send their managers, sales experts and engineers, along with product samples, to big Chinese cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai to set up representative offices and test the viability of the Chinese market.

This was particularly so during the 1980s, and by the 1990s many of these companies began building factories in China, their number surging after the country joined the World Trade Organization in 2001.

With products made in China being supplied to both domestic and international markets, foreign companies such as Schneider Electric of France and Bosch Group of Germany increasingly appointed Chinese executives to head their operations in the country. This move was part of broader localization efforts that included setting up research and development centers in China.

As the People's Republic of China celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding this year, senior executives of multinational companies say the country's recent economic reforms are poised to bolster the global supply chain network and deepen the integration of foreign investment with the country's economic growth.

For global firms that produce and distribute countless products and services, China has evolved into a place for promoting growth and innovation.

Anna An, president for the China unit of Henkel AG & Co., a German industrial and consumer goods manufacturer, said that since entering China more than 50 years ago her company has grown with the country, continuing to invest so as to promote talent and industry growth.

"We will continue investing in China to further support our customers with innovative and sustainable solutions and products in sectors where we see strong future demand, such as consumer electronics, new energy vehicles, advanced manufacturing, packaging and consumer goods."

Nat Madarang, president for Asia Pacific with Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. of the United States, said China is crucial to the company's global business strategy, and that China's new reform initiatives, aimed at expanding opening-up and fostering industrial upgrades and technological innovation, align well with his company's objectives.

"We see substantial opportunities in China's reform and opening-up initiatives and remain dedicated to deepening our presence and investment in China and the broader Asia-Pacific region."

Goodyear says it has benefited from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, shipping tires made in China to Japan and a number of Southeast Asian countries.

SEE TRADE, PAGE 2



Workers on an assembly line of SAIC-GM-Wuling in Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. JIN HAUYUAN / XINHUA



Tourists enjoy the sights on a stream in Wuyishan National Park, Fujian province. QIU RUQUAN / XINHUA

Birds are back and forests are singing

At dawn Liu Hai'an dons his work uniform, packs an electronic tablet, climbing ropes and food, and heads off with a colleague to patrol Wuyishan National Park in Fujian province.

Their route covers the park's core protection zone, with elevations ranging from 1,312 to 7,087 feet. Liu and his partner have to scale cliffs, cross streams and pass through virgin forests, observing and recording vegetation, trees and all creatures.

"We patrol for more than 15 days each month, with each patrol lasting more than three hours," said Liu, 31, who has worked in the park for seven years. "When we have to go to remote areas for long patrols, it often takes six to eight hours."

The rangers' daily duties include preventing the illegal expansion of tea plantations, controlling the spread of pine wilt disease and stopping forest fires, illegal logging and poaching. If they discover any illegal activities they have to report them and take immediate enforcement measures.

Liu tells of an instance when they came across a tea garden beneath a cliff.

"There was no clear path down the mountain except for a narrow staircase. It was raining and the path was slippery, and we had to tie the climbing rope to a tree and slowly go down step by step."

Liu is one of 168 forest rangers working in Wuyishan National Park. They conducted

more than 16,000 patrols last year, covering 25,290 miles, according to official figures.

Since 1999 the Wuyi Mountains have been included on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List and the World Natural Heritage List.

The park, which covers about 316,295 acres and has 81.4 square miles of primary forest vegetation, was one of the first five national parks established, in October 2021. It is home to more than 10,000 species of flora and fauna.

Measures such as improving environmental protection and restoration, strengthening biodiversity conservation, and improving ecological protection facilities have been adopted to preserve the park's natural and cultural treasures.

Intelligent technology has also been adopted to protect Wuyishan's biodiversity. Nearly 800 infrared cameras are installed in the park to monitor surface water, wildlife, air quality, vegetation and tourist numbers, said Chen Wei, deputy head of the Wuyishan National Park Management Bureau.

Computer technology allows rangers to record patrols through photos and videos, and transmit the data to a smart management center. The system helps ensure that management is kept abreast of what is happening, Chen said.

Through improved management and law enforcement, the park is better able to combat activities that cause eco-

logical destruction, he said.

"The mountains are greener, the waters are clearer."

Indicators for surface water, air quality and forest soil all meet Class I level, the highest national standard, with a forest coverage rate of 94.5%, Chen said.

Comprehensive protection methods not only safeguard the rich biodiversity of Wuyishan National Park, but also set a benchmark for the effective management of national parks, ensuring that nature thrives in harmony with humans, he said.

With greater emphasis on protection, as well as strengthening local villagers' awareness of conservation, the ecosystem in the Wuyi Mountains is now gradually recovering from human-caused damage.

Twenty-nine new species of flora and fauna have been discovered in the national park over the past five years.

Liu has witnessed the improvements firsthand. Before the park was established, one stream would turn muddy whenever it rained, he said. However, nowadays, unless there is a torrential downpour, the stream is clear, and fish can be seen swimming in its water.

"As the environment has improved, wildlife has returned. We now often spot flocks of silver pheasants during the day, but a few years ago we would have been lucky to see two or three of the birds."

—HU MEIDONG AND ZHOU JIN

94 YEARS ON, OPERA MAESTRO'S L.A. ENCORE

Mei Lanfang is a legendary figure in Peking Opera, and the University of Southern California is marking the 130th anniversary of his birth and whirlwind tour of the United States with an exhibition.

Reunion: Mei Lan-Fang and the United States, in the university's East Asian Library, commemorates the 94th anniversary of Mei's historic visit to the U.S. It explores a romantic narrative of connection, legacy and reunion, honoring Mei's lasting influence and the cultural ties that continue to bridge nations.

In early 1930 Mei embarked on a tour of the U.S., performing in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington and New York.

Few moments in history had brought the U.S. and China closer than the six months Mei spent captivating audi-

ences with his Peking Opera performances, according to media reports.

Thousands filled theaters across the country to witness his art, and many more were able to meet him at receptions, banquets and public gatherings.

The visit played a ground-breaking role in fostering cultural exchanges between China and the U.S., said Li Shufeng, vice-president of the Chinese National Academy of Arts, co-organizer with the university of the exhibition.

"This art exhibition is an effort to follow the path paved by our predecessors," Li said at the opening ceremony of the exhibition on Sept 13. "It introduced American audiences to the beauty of Chinese opera and the richness of China's ancient cultural heritage, offering them a window into

China's long history."

Los Angeles was the most significant stop during Mei's U.S. visit. It was there that he was welcomed by Hollywood and opera enthusiasts, being feted by both the performing arts and academic communities. Notably, USC awarded Mei an honorary doctorate.

In honor of this recognition that has spanned a century, we followed in the footsteps of Mei Lanfang and brought his life and art back to this campus, which once held deep affection for him, continuing this beautiful and romantic story," Li said.

The exhibition, which runs until Dec 20, has four sections that feature oil paintings and traditional Chinese artworks centered on Mei.

The exhibition also has a range of significant academic publications on Mei and the



A Peking Opera performance at an exhibition to commemorate Mei Lanfang's visit to the United States at the University of Southern California. RENA LI / CHINA DAILY

Mei school of art, along with historical artifacts such as vintage photos, playbills and maps from Mei's 1930 visit to the U.S.

"Through these multifaceted exhibits, the exhibition brings to life Mei's personal

journey, stagecraft and his historic tour of the U.S.," Li said.

"They offer audiences a deep and captivating glimpse into the aesthetics and spiritual essence of traditional Chinese opera, as embodied by Mei."

Melissa Just, dean of the USC Libraries, said the connection between Mei and the university makes the East Asian Library the perfect venue for this exhibition.

"This beautiful reunion allows us to step back in time and explore Mei's remarkable life. This is a true cross-cultural collaboration."

The exhibition marks the beginning of collaboration between the Chinese National Academy of Arts and the university, which has signed an agreement on exchanges over the next five years.

—RENA LI

SOCIETY



A family who have been relocated from their remote home in the mountains to a modern community in Anshun, Guizhou province. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA

Trade: Innovation a winner

From page 1

Driven by factors such as rapid industrial upgrading, shifting business models and growing demand for personalized products, many multinational companies have recognized that Chinese consumers and the business environment are continuing to evolve, said Tang Yihong, a professor specializing in cross-border investment at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

In response, these companies have established more innovation and service centers to meet local demand in China, she said. From January to August China's actual use of foreign direct investment reached 580.2 billion yuan (\$81.8 billion). Affected by a high base in the corresponding period last year, the scale of such investment fell year-on-year but remained relatively high in the context of the past decade, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Between January and August the foreign trade value of foreign-invested businesses was 8.4 trillion yuan in China, 1.5% more than in the corresponding period last year, accounting for 29.4% of the country's total foreign trade value, the General Administration of Customs said.

China has retained its position as the world's top trading nation for the seventh consecutive year and solidified its status as a major trading partner with more than 150 countries and regions, the General Administration of Customs said in July.

The country's stable share of the export market underlines its prowess in delivering quality products highly sought after globally, said Sang Baichuan, dean of the Institute of International Economy at the University of International Business and Economics.

China's imports have not only fueled the country's economic growth, but have also served as a robust driving force for the development of other economies, said Liang Ming, director of the Institute of International Trade, which is part of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing.

Over the years China has adopted import expansion policies including reducing tariffs on a wide range of products, streamlining Customs clearance procedures, and increasing support to foreign companies seeking access to the Chinese market, Liang said.

The value of China's imports has remained the second largest in the world for years, according to Customs. The country's imports were worth 11.5 trillion yuan in 2012 and 18 trillion yuan last year.

- ZHONG NAN AND WANG KEJU

Fight that has routed poverty

When TV cameras captured Yu Yanqia, 8, dragging herself upside down along a steel rope strung above the raging Nujiang River on her daily journey to school, no bridges spanned the Nujiang, in rural Fugong county, Yunnan province. So the only way anyone could cross the river was the primitive and precarious steel rope and pulley system that Yu used that day in 2007.

Since then things have vastly improved for Yu and the area in which she lives.

Yu, now a doctor at a hospital in Nujiang Lisu autonomous prefecture, in which Fugong county is situated, remembers how her heart raced with the howling wind each time she crossed the river.

"I'd never been far from my village, so I just thought everyone used pulley bridges to cross rivers," she told Chinese media in July.

The images seen nationally of her crossing the river spurred action to build a bridge across the Nujiang, and when it was completed the following year Yu was chosen as the first person to cross it.

Yu's story encapsulates the rapid progress that has been made in China in improving infrastructure and lifting people out of poverty, especially in remote parts of the country.

Twenty years ago Fugong had some of the most entrenched poverty in the country, with more than half of its people being impoverished. Yunnan had the highest number of poverty-stricken counties in the country, totaling 88.

Today villages are linked by paved roads, and bridges span rivers, meaning that communication, the flow of



A farmer tends to cherry tomato vines in a greenhouse in a village in Pingshan, Hebei province. CHEN YEHUA / XINHUA

98.99 million

rural poor have been lifted out of poverty in China.

people and commerce have greatly improved. Access to education, healthcare, work and daily necessities has also improved.

Since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 the battle against poverty has been a top priority for the country. A key aspect of this campaign has been improving rural connectivity since 2012.

By 2016 all pulley bridges in Nujiang prefecture had been replaced by modern bridges. Today these bridges along the Nujiang River, rather than just being transportation channels, have also become tourist attractions.

Since 2012, China has built or rebuilt more than 1.57 million miles of rural roads and built paved roads in 1,040 townships and 105,000 villages, according to official figures.

More than 50,000 villages

have also been connected by passenger bus services.

On Feb 25, 2021, at a conference in Beijing, President Xi Jinping announced that China had achieved complete victory over absolute poverty, with a total of 98.99 million rural poor having been lifted out of poverty.

This achievement is all the more remarkable given the global trend of rising poverty.

The World Bank says 712 million people worldwide were living in extreme poverty in 2022, 23 million more than in 2019.

Before National Poverty Relief Day on Oct 17 four years ago, Guy Ryder, then director-general of the International Labor Organization, said China's decision to stick to the goal of eradicating rural poverty by the end of 2020 amid a "complex economic environment" set a benchmark in meeting the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which include eliminating extreme poverty worldwide in a decade.

China has said it will sustain progress and prevent relapses into poverty.

The number of Chinese who

escaped poverty over the past 40 years has accounted for more than 70% of the world's impoverished people during that period, measured by the poverty threshold set by the World Bank.

Du Shuangqing, who lives in Gansu province, once home to some of the country's poorest families, is one of the beneficiaries of the improvements.

Du was born into a poor farming family in mountainous Longnan city in 1988. When he was 9, he lost his right arm in a rockslide, which resulted in medical expenses his family were unable to meet.

Du, now 36, who works for the local disabled people's federation, said he would have dropped out of school had it not been for government allowances designed to help poor students.

"Our grain harvest was usually small, and my parents had too many children to support. Back then, life was really hard."

In recent years local authorities have invested tens of millions of yuan to build a road linking his secluded village with the outside world, even though it is home to only about 40 families, he said.

Yan Yong, an official from a once-impoverished village in Yunnan province, said paved roads have cut the journey time to a nearby township from about four hours to just 20 minutes, benefiting the local sugar cane industry, which was introduced as part of the local anti-poverty drive.

"We have good natural advantages for the development of tourism and we're planning to build a hot spring resort so locals will not need to travel far to find jobs," Yan said.

- LI LEI AND LI YINGQING

Business pioneer's 'magical time'

Ker Gibbs, a veteran of U.S.-China business relations and an advocate for engagement, offers a unique perspective on the huge changes China has undergone over the past 40 years or so.

Gibbs' early years in China in the late 1980s and early 1990s coincided with the country's reform and opening-up to the world. He describes this period as a "magical time" characterized by optimism and a common vision of China's integration into the global economy.

"The atmosphere was filled with optimism and energy. Foreigners working in China saw the obvious potential if our two systems could somehow become compatible. Our Chinese counterparts were eager to learn and open to adopting new methods and management techniques."

Gibbs, then working for the Boston Consulting Group in Shanghai and San Francisco, said they passed on to local teams in China their expertise in modern business practices, such as inventory management, quality

FRIENDS AFAR

control and worker safety.

It was "a golden age for U.S.-China relations", in contrast to the current environment, he said.

China was "a rugged place", he said, and "living conditions were difficult and my work environment was nothing like it would have been in San Francisco or Boston, but China was fun and exciting. Every day was different, better than the last, and the optimism was infectious."

From that time he began to split his time between Asia and Silicon Valley, California, serving in executive positions with Apple, Disney, and high-growth internet businesses.

In 2002 he moved to Shanghai, where his career in high tech led him to banking and then to investment. He served as president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai from 2019 and returned to the United States in 2022.

He is now an executive in residence with the China Busi-

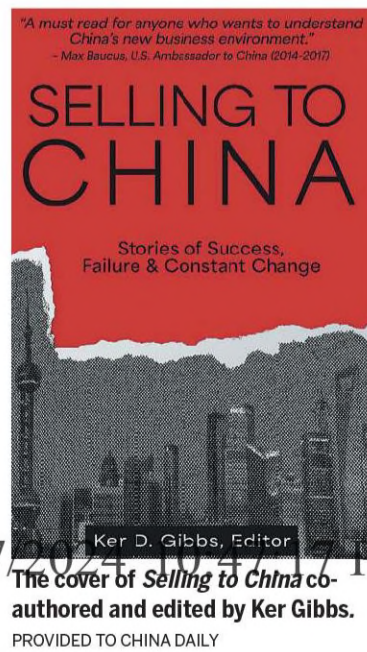
ness Studies Initiative at the University of San Francisco, and a member of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations.

Gibbs' firsthand experience in China is captured in the recently published *Selling to China*, a book he co-authored and edited, which he said aims to refocus the conversation on the opportunities and successes that emerged from U.S.-China commercial ties and to promote continued business collaboration.

The book looks at the challenges and opportunities in industries in which the co-authors have particular expertise, and it offers insights on how to successfully navigate the Chinese market.

Since the early 1990s U.S. business in China has been largely a story of success, the book says. While acknowledging the challenges faced by U.S. companies operating in China, Gibbs said many have done well in China over the years.

"At this point, the China market is so big and so important that no company can be



The cover of *Selling to China* co-authored and edited by Ker Gibbs. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

considered truly global unless it has a business in China, but it's also important to be in the market so that we don't miss out on innovation. ...

"Business between the U.S. and China has created jobs and lifted millions of people into the middle class. For years people have traveled between the U.S. and China as tourists or students, giving each side an opportunity to learn and make new discoveries."

- LIA ZHU

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BUSINESS

New rules set to boost investor confidence

Multinational corporations say they will deepen ties with their partners in China and seize the opportunities offered, given that the country has removed all foreign investment restrictions in manufacturing. This became clear in this year's version of the negative list for foreign investment access.

The shortened negative list underlines China's determination to fulfill its commitment to expand high-standard opening-up and will contribute to a more favorable business environment and consolidate the confidence of foreign investors, officials, experts and executives of foreign-funded companies said.

The new list, jointly issued by the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Commerce, will take effect on Nov 1 and reduce the number of restrictions from 31 to 29, achieving zero restrictions in manufacturing.

The country's latest measures to expand foreign investment access in manufacturing are of vital significance in establishing a modern industrial system and building more open and resilient industrial and supply chains, the Ministry of Commerce said.

The move will help attract more foreign investment in advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries, improving the investment structure and accelerating the growth of new quality productive forces, and will give strong impetus to China's high-quality economic growth, the ministry said.

Senior executives of foreign-funded companies said the move will help improve the long-term business environment for foreign companies in China.

Ian Shih, president of Rockwell Automation China, said the U.S. industrial automation company appreciates China's commitment to expanding high-standard opening-up and deepening reforms in foreign investment, and that these initiatives provide a favorable business environment for the long-term growth of foreign companies in China.

"Rockwell Automation



Tesla's Optimus robot on display during the 2024 Inclusion Conference on the Bund in Shanghai on Sept 7.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"With the new policy facilitation we will continue to deepen our presence in China and increase investment in new energy projects."

REN JING

remains committed to advancing technological progress in collaboration with local partners," Shih said. "Through close collaboration we actively promote the large-scale application of emerging technologies such as 5G, artificial intelligence and the industrial internet of things in China."

Rockwell Automation is committed to helping Chinese partners improve their core competitiveness and aiding in the high-quality development of China's manufacturing, he said.

Tetsuro Homma, executive vice-president of Panasonic Holdings Corp, said the significant measures taken by the Chinese government to achieve high-quality development will help foreign companies better seize opportunities, strengthen their presence and increase their

investment in China.

"I have always believed that China is not only a manufacturing giant and a major consumer market, but also an innovator with exceptional engineering talent," Homma said.

Ji Jianjun, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research in Beijing, said the implementation of the latest version of the negative list will not only provide broad space for deeper international collaboration in industrial and supply chains but also create enormous opportunities for multinationals to invest in the country.

Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy, said the country has sent a clear signal that it is committed to further opening up its economy to the outside world and creating a world-class and market-oriented business environment governed by a sound legal framework.

The removal of restrictions on foreign investment in manufacturing is an essential requirement of China's economic transformation and upgrading and will attract more foreign capital into high-end manufacturing, research and development and design, and help the

country move up the value chain, Zhu said.

From January to August nearly 37,000 foreign-funded companies were newly established in China, 11.5% more than in the corresponding period last year, the Ministry of Commerce said.

Ren Jing, senior vice-president of Schneider Electric, a French industrial and technology group, said: "With the new policy facilitation we will continue to deepen our presence in China and increase investment in new energy projects."

Bai Ming, a member of the academic degree committee at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said China's opening-up efforts go far beyond the negative list, in contrast to the trade protectionism seen in some developed countries.

Karen Chen, managing director and chairman of Singapore Exchange China, said, "China's reform and opening-up policies are not just offering increased investment and partnership prospects for businesses worldwide, but are also stimulating global economic expansion and contributing to the pursuit of sustainable development globally."

— FAN FEIFEI, ZHONG NAN AND OUYANG SHIJI

City values industrial ties with Germany

When a street modeled on a Bavarian town opened in Shenyang 15 months ago, it was yet another reminder of the close ties that Germany and the city in Northeast China enjoy. Similarities between the two are exemplified, too, in the strength of the machinery, textiles and chemicals industries in the city of more than 9.2 million.

Liaoning province, in which Shenyang is situated, has provided a sound environment for foreign investment, and foreign companies are confident about the city's prospects, says Jan Block, a manager with the aerospace and automotive firm Otto Fuchs Technology (Shenyang) Co. Ltd., which set up operations in the city 14 years ago.

Wang Xinwei, deputy Party secretary of Liaoning and Party secretary of Shenyang, said: "Shenyang and Germany have great potential to work more closely together. Shenyang is a city of innovation and openness, with a rich culture and livability. We hope to jointly promote industrial development, expand consumer markets, foster scientific and technological innovation and deepen cultural exchanges with Germany."

At an exchange event in Munich recently, Shenyang vaunted its credentials and expressed its determination to integrate into the global economy. Indeed, as China fully lifts restrictions on foreign investment in manufacturing, a new wave of foreign investment is pouring into Shenyang.

Otto Fuchs Technology plans to increase investment and open new production lines, Block said. This reflects foreign companies' confidence in Shenyang and underscores the city's appeal as China continues to open up.

Since starting production in Shenyang in 2010, Otto Fuchs Technology has equipped more than 15 million vehicles with parts it has produced. The company had revenue of \$88.5 million last year, four times what it was after it had just arrived in Shenyang.

Products of the company, which is primarily engaged in the research, development, manufacturing and processing of automotive parts such as aluminum alloy chassis, have entered the supply chains of well-known automakers including Audi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Tesla and Volkswagen.

Zhu Ling, director of the Shenyang Municipal Bureau of Commerce, said that by July Shenyang had approved the establishment of 207 German-funded companies. Among those present is BMW, which said it has invested more than \$13.8 billion in the city.

The value of Shenyang's imports and exports with Germany was \$4.61 billion last year, making the country the top-ranked among 219 countries and regions trading with the city.

BMW Group's production plant in Shenyang, opened in 2003, has become one of the company's largest, accounting for one-third of BMW's global car production. On May 8 the 6 millionth BMW car made in Shenyang rolled off the production line.

Shenyang serves as a crucial channel connecting Europe, Mongolia, Russia, Japan and South Korea, partly thanks to the new rail freight services that came into operation in March last year.

Wang Yan, director and professor of the economics department at Shenyang Academy of Governance, said Shenyang has recently adopted many measures relating to manufacturing, markets and channels to attract foreign investment in the city.

— WU YONG, CAO HAILIN AND LIU SHICHENG

Foreign pastures provide rich pickings for internet traders

On a busy day late last month Zhang Wanchen, 34, a white-collar worker in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, placed an order online using her smartphone, to buy a gift box of Japanese cookies, dried cranberries from the United States, a carton of New Zealand milk, Norwegian salmon and French red wine, all of which would be delivered to her home in the next few days.

"These products all looked and tasted authentic, and seemed worth the prices I paid for them," Zhang said. "When I studied overseas I often got cosmetics, handbags and electronic devices for my relatives and friends at home."

"After returning to China I found online shopping very convenient, and more discounts are available on such foreign products when they have sales."

Zhang is among a growing number of Chinese consumers who are buying imported and foreign-branded products, which have become a key driver of upgraded consumption fueled by government incentives. Lower tariffs, an expanded list of imported goods and a gradual improvement in cross-border logistics are all important, industry insiders said.

A report by the Consumption and Industry Development Research Institute of the Chinese e-commerce



A worker sorts packages at an e-commerce warehouse in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province. LIU JILI / FOR CHINA DAILY

company JD said people aged 26-35 are the main consumers of imported commodities, accounting for 45% of buyers, while consumers in the 46-55 age group have contributed to the fastest growth in purchases of imported products.

Personal care products, cosmetics and skincare, food and beverages as well as maternity and infant products are the categories most favored by Chinese consumers buying imports, the report said.

While residents living in first-tier cities have become the primary buyers of imported products, those in lower-tier markets have shown a growing interest in buying such commodities, it said.

"Chinese consumers have shown rising purchasing demand for diversified, per-

sonalized and niche overseas products, and are attaching more importance to the value of the goods they buy," said Zhang Zhouping, an analyst who tracks business-to-business and cross-border activities at the Internet Economy Institute, a domestic consultancy.

China's cross-border e-commerce industry has grown strongly in recent years, and its imports and exports were worth 1.22 trillion yuan (\$171.5 billion) in the first half of this year, 10.5% more than in the corresponding period last year, the General Administration of Customs said.

Even as foreign brands use cross-border e-commerce channels to reach Chinese consumers, Chinese businesses are speeding up their push into overseas markets.

Temu, the cross-border e-commerce platform of the Chinese online discounter PDD Holdings, has become popular among overseas shoppers because it offers a wide range of goods, including apparel, consumer electronics, jewelry, shoes, cosmetics and baby products at competitive prices.

Temu, which opened in the U.S. in September 2022, has entered more than 50 countries, covering North America, Europe, Asia and Oceania.

Chen Lei, chairman and co-chief executive of PDD Holdings, said the company hopes to use the supply chain capacities it has built in recent years to create a new channel that enables people in different countries and regions directly buy products from factories, providing more flexible and personalized supply chains and more cost-effective shopping.

The fast-fashion online retailer Shein is ratcheting up resources to give a strong boost to the transformation of traditional industries by making use of its digital and flexible supply chains.

For sellers good at designing and producing products, but that have no overseas sales and operations experience, Shein said, it will provide one-stop services, including commodity operations, warehousing, logistics, customer service and after-sales service.

— FAN FEIFEI

BEIJING SPECIAL



Beijing residents celebrate the inclusion of the city's Central Axis into the UNESCO World Heritage List at a square between the Bell and Drum Towers in late July. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Backbone of city helps to protect ancient areas

The Beijing Central Axis was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in late July at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee in New Delhi, India.

The inclusion has brought the total number of World Heritage Sites in China to 59.

The Beijing Central Axis stretches more than 4.8 miles, from the Yongding Gate in the south, running through the Tian'anmen Square complex and the Forbidden City, up to the Bell and Drum Towers in the north. It encompasses imperial palaces and gardens, imperial sacrificial buildings, ancient city management, national ceremonial and public buildings.

Celebrated as "the backbone of Beijing", the Central Axis was initially established in the 13th century and has evolved to become the longest urban axis in the world today.

Over the past 700 years, it has witnessed the continuity and profound history of Chinese civilization, as well as the dynamic progress and the ever-renewing nature of the capital.

"The architectural complex along the Central Axis is a unique testament to Chinese civilization and the cultural spirit of the Chinese nation," said Lyu Zhou, director of the National Heritage Center at Tsinghua University.

"It is an outstanding example



of the mature stage of the Central Axis development in traditional Chinese capitals, and continues to influence Beijing's urban construction and development," Lyu noted.

Focusing on the Central Axis, Beijing has used its addition to the UNESCO World Heritage List to drive the overall protection of the city's ancient areas.

For example, it has issued several documents, such as Regulations on the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of the Central Axis of Beijing, and the Protection and Management Plan for the Central Axis of Beijing (2022-35), with an aim to innovate cultural heritage protection and management.

Through rounds of relocation, restoration and environmental improvements, the living environment and urban landscape of Beijing have been improved in recent years, and the sense of happiness and gain of local residents has also been enhanced.

China's efforts and achievements in protecting and inheriting the cultural heritage of the old city of Beijing have been praised by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

"In light of what I have seen and heard in China, inscribing the Central Axis of Beijing on the World Heritage List is of profound significance. For generations, this grand urban axis has held rich and deep meanings," said an expert from Zambia.

In late 2023, China unveiled the country's first public participation mechanism for cultural heritage protection. It clearly states that all members of the public have the responsibility and obligation to protect the Central Axis of Beijing.

At the beginning of this year, the first batch of 30 cultural heritage protection supervisors for the Central Axis began their duties.

Additionally, Beijing has held four sessions of the Central Axis cultural heritage inheritance and innovation competition, receiving more than 190,000 entries and 410,000 participants aged 3.5 to 86 years old.

Also, the Beijing Cultural Heritage Bureau has established a think tank composed of more than 200 experts in seven fields, including cultural heritage, law, cultural tourism and digital technology.

The initiative aims to promote the protection, management, utilization and display of the cultural heritage of the Central Axis, said Chu Jianhao, deputy director of the bureau.

— HAO NAN

Eight civilization marvels to be explored in Beijing

Beijing ranks highest among Chinese cities by number of World Heritage Sites, with the city's Central Axis the latest to make the UNESCO World Heritage List in late July.

Currently, the city is home to eight World Heritage Sites, whose preservation and promotion are of importance to Beijing's development, experts said.

The city has established and improved institutions for the protection and management of World Heritage Sites, promoting their scientific protection and effective supervision, especially in such areas as technological research, exhibition and education, as well as social and public outreach, said an official from the Beijing Cultural Heritage Bureau.

• Beijing Central Axis

As a masterpiece of the ideal urban spatial order of China, the Beijing Central Axis was initially established in the 13th century and took shape in the 16th century. It runs through the heart of Beijing, spanning nearly 5 miles from the Bell and Drum Towers in the north of the old city to the Yongding Gate in the south, linking a string of iconic Beijing sites.

• Great Wall

The Great Wall is a spiritual symbol of the Chinese nation and the largest and most wide-ranging cultural heritage in China. After Emperor Qinshihuang, the founding emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), unified the country, he had the walls from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) connected and repaired. The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) was the last dynasty to construct the Great Wall on a large scale. According to a report released by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, Great Wall resources from various eras are distributed in 15 provincial-level regions. In Beijing, the Great Wall stretches from Pinggu district in the east, through Miyun, Huairou, Yanqing and Changping districts, to Mentougou district in the west. The Great Wall was inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 1987.

• Forbidden City

Beijing's Forbidden City served as the imperial palace for 24 emperors of the Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. One of the world's largest and best-preserved wooden structures, the unparalleled architectural masterpiece is acclaimed as one of the world's top five palaces. The palace buildings are all constructed with wood frames, yellow-glaze tiled roofs, and white marble bases. The

Beijing Forbidden City was included in the World Heritage List in December 1987.

• Peking Man Site at Zhoukoudian

The Zhoukoudian Peking Man Site is located in Zhoukoudian town of Fangshan district, southwest of Beijing. It is one of the richest, most systematic and valuable human sites from the early Paleolithic era in the world. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in December 1987.

• Summer Palace

The Summer Palace was first built in 1750 and was burned down by the Anglo-French forces during the second Opium War in 1860. It was reconstructed in 1886, and two years later, was renamed the Summer Palace. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in November 1998.

• Temple of Heaven

The Temple of Heaven is where emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties worshipped the God of Heaven. It was first built in 1420 and underwent continuous expansion and renovation until it was completed during the Qing Dynasty. Covering an area of nearly 586 acres, the Temple of Heaven joined the ranks of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in November 1998.

• Ming Tombs

The Ming Tombs, located on Tianshou Mountain in Changping district of Beijing, is a grand complex of mausoleums for 13 emperors of the Ming Dynasty. It is characterized by its grand scale, complete system and sound preservation. Covering an area of about 46 square miles, the Ming Tombs site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in July 2003.

• Grand Canal

The Grand Canal, which began construction in 486 BC, is the world's earliest canal. It is also the largest in scale and longest in route. Stretching from north to south, it connects five major water systems: the Haihe, Yellow, Huaihe, Yangtze and Qiantang rivers. Along its 1,678-mile span, the waterway passes through 27 cities in eight provinces and municipalities. The canal was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in June 2014. In Beijing, the canal includes the Tonghui River sections in Xicheng, Dongcheng and Tongzhou districts, watercourses in the Shichahai area, and a former course of the Yuhe River from Wanning Bridge in the west to Dongbuya Bridge in the east.

— YUAN SHENGGAO

Dotted with landmarks, Central Axis acts as cultural and social bedrock in capital

Rather than a silent historical site overlooked in modern times, the centuries-old Beijing Central Axis is full of vim and vigor, and plays a part in the daily lives of many Beijing residents.

Among them is a retired worker surnamed Zhao, 68, who pedals his bicycle to Jingshan Park twice a week, drawn by the sunset from the esteemed Wanchun Pavilion on Jingshan Mountain, the apex of the Beijing Central Axis. "I just love watching the sunset at Jingshan and the panoramic view from Wanchun Pavilion is truly unparalleled," he told Guangming Daily.

Another resident surnamed Sun habitually strolls through the Temple of Heaven Park every weekend morning. As the largest park in central Beijing, the Temple of Heaven welcomes over half of its visitors from local neighborhoods.

Once an imperial sacrificial altar venue during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the park now serves as a sanctuary for residents like Sun, where ancient trees, the chorus of cicadas, and the vast blue sky evoke a sense of nostalgia.

The Bell and Drum Towers, situated at the northern end of the Central Axis, once governed the city's rhythm with their evening drums and morning bells.

Facing south from the outer corridor of the Drum Tower, one can see the Wanchun Pavilion atop Jingshan Mountain. Below, ancient alleys still retain

their charm, with traditional courtyard dwellings neatly arranged, perfectly dovetailing with modern commercial high-rises flanking the Central Axis. Together they compose a vibrant tableau of urban life, blending ancient heritage with contemporary dynamism.

Harmonious coexistence

At dusk, amid their melodic chirping sounds, flocks of swifts perch at Zhengyang Gate on the Central Axis. Their group flight against the backdrop of ancient architecture's soaring eaves and arches creates a picturesque scene.

Zhengyang Gate is an important habitat for swifts. Every early April, they migrate to Beijing, nesting and roosting in the eaves of the city tower, before embarking on a journey to South Africa in July and August.

To better protect Beijing swifts, local authorities have initiated research programs at Zhengyang Gate. "Since 2018, we have installed high-definition monitoring devices on the top floor of the city tower to observe their nests around-the-clock," Yuan Xuejun, a researcher on the Beijing Central Axis, told Beijing Daily.

"So far, we have amassed a large amount of valuable video data capturing their nesting and hatching processes, and witnessing fledgling swifts' growth," she said.

To ensure the swifts' well-being, researchers planned protective measures during a restoration project at Zheng-

yang Gate. The renovation of the wooden structure, initially slated for early June, was postponed to avoid disrupting the swifts during their peak hatching period.

"During the renovation process, the swifts' nests on the top floor of the city tower are left alone as much as possible to make it easier for the swifts to accurately find their home when they return to Beijing the following year," Yuan said. Even if relocation is necessary, construction workers "took photos to record the precise location of the nests, kept the photo data, and after the renovation was completed, placed the nests back in their original positions intact".

After the renovation, Zhengyang Gate has recaptured its allure. Every spring and summer, the swifts return and symbolize a harmonious coexistence between ecological preservation and ancient architecture.

Light and shade

The Beijing Central Axis not only plays a pivotal role in the city's spatial layout but links a string of cultural venues.

Among the array of bookstores dotting the Central Axis is Hanfenlou Bookstore, which is located on the bustling Wangfujing Street. Originating in 1904 as the library of the Commercial Press, Hanfenlou transitioned into a public library in 1926. Historical records show that it was once the largest library in Asia during its heyday.



A collection of books about the Beijing Central Axis on display at Wangfujing Bookstore in the city center. LU JINFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

In 2003, it reopened to the public as a modern bookstore.

Also on Wangfujing Street stands the Wangfujing Bookstore, a branch of the Xinhua Bookstore chain. Established in 1949, Wangfujing Bookstore has proved to be a wellspring of intellectual nourishment for generations of readers.

Other noteworthy bookstores in the vicinity include the Sanlian Taofen Bookstore, which is the first 24-hour bookstore on the Chinese mainland, and the time-honored Weibao Bookstore, a themed outlet under the Xinhua Bookstore brand that focuses on the essence of the Beijing Central Axis. Weibao's legacy traces back to the 1911-49 period.

The Beijing Central Axis is also adorned with a plethora of art centers, theaters and galleries, engaging the public in artistic discourse, championing the allure of art, music and humanities, and enriching the cultural tapestry of the city.

The Beijing Tianqiao Performing Arts Center, a shining gem in the southern stretch of the Central Axis, reported more than 1 billion yuan (\$140.19 mil-

lion) in total box office revenue from January to May 15.

The National Centre for the Performing Arts, inaugurated in December 2007, had hosted more than 12,700 commercial performances by the end of 2023, showcasing myriad performing arts events.

Distinguished conductors alongside top-tier orchestras have graced the stage, leaving indelible imprints at the NCPA.

The Forbidden City Concert Hall in Beijing is revered as a "musical gem in the royal gardens of China", inviting audiences to immerse themselves in a vibrant and diverse artistic realm.

"The architectural complexes along the Central Axis were not created at a specific historical moment but rather are a group of living heritage, blending the past and the present," Lyu Zhou, director of the National Heritage Center at Tsinghua University, told Beijing Daily. "Since its establishment, the Central Axis has borne witness to urban historical evolution, exerting a continuous influence over the city's development."

— YUAN SHENGGAO