

POLICY REVIEW



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Nighttime economy to help drive growth

Spending on after dark dining rose 47 percent last year, with Beijing and Shanghai leading way

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Authorities nationwide have beefed up measures to develop the nighttime economy, with steps to encourage post-dusk business activities and later closing hours at museums and art galleries.

The moves follow reports that China's economic growth slowed to 6.2 percent year-on-year in the second quarter, its weakest pace in at least 27 years, with consumption contributing more than 60 percent of GDP growth.

A number of cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin and Jinan, the capital of Shandong province, have recently rolled out measures to shore up the nighttime economy, also known as after-hours economic activity, with longer operating hours for public transport.

The Beijing Municipal Bureau of Commerce unveiled a string of policies last month to support growth of the nighttime economy and better meet demand for more high-quality,

diversified and convenient consumption options.

The moves include later closing hours at tourist spots, museums, sports grounds and art galleries. The city will extend the operating hours of several subway lines every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and 25 night bus lines in key areas will operate more frequently. Seven new bus lines will also open to facilitate night travel for large residential communities in the city's north.

Zhao Ping, who researches the consumption economy at the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said there was a great deal of potential for different areas to promote growth of nighttime business activities.

"Local authorities have an important role to play," she said. "The most important thing is to ensure good planning and innovative development. They must give play to local strengths and create an enabling environment for consumers."

Zhao said the scope of the nighttime economy extended far beyond night markets.

“Encouraging nighttime business activities will unleash the consumption potential of city-dwellers who are busy at work during the daytime.”

Fu Yifu, a consumption analyst at Suning Institute of Finance

47 percent
proportion of spending on nighttime dining around the country rose last year

"The catering sector is only the starting point," she said. "There is still so much to explore in aspects of culture and tourism."

The authorities in Shanghai unveiled a list of cultural activities and tour routes on Thursday to boost the city's nighttime economy. The Municipal Culture and Tourism Bureau said 105 tourist spots, art galleries, museums and memorials across the city had taken measures to meet the growing demand for nighttime leisure activities from Shanghai residents and tourists.

A report by Meituan Dianping, China's largest provider of on-demand online services, said spending on nighttime dining around the country rose 47 percent last year, higher than the daytime growth, with Beijing and Shanghai ranking first and second.

The report also showed that 16 of the 20 cities with the highest spending on nighttime dining were in South China, and that people between the ages of 20 and 40 accounted for most of the spending. Meanwhile, the State Administra-

tion for Market Regulation has called for greater efforts to ensure food safety as local authorities encourage growth of the nighttime catering sector.

An unidentified administration official told Xinhua News Agency it would implement identical oversight of nighttime and daytime catering service providers.

"Food safety is the foundation for nighttime catering services," the official said. "Only through safe eating can we ensure consumers have a good experience and the city displays the charm of its late-night cuisine culture."

Fu Yifu, a consumption analyst at Suning Institute of Finance, said growth of the nighttime economy will help boost domestic consumption and create more jobs.

"Encouraging nighttime business activities will unleash the consumption potential of city-dwellers who are busy at work during the daytime," he said. "It will also promote the growth of related sectors and spur cities to refine their infrastructure and urban transport."

Policy digest

Registration in platform economy made easier

China will take measures to encourage the development of the platform economy as a new form of industry in order to nurture new economic drivers, according to a guideline published on Thursday.

The guideline, issued by the General Office of the State Council, said the internet platform economy has made an important contribution to optimizing resource allocation, promoting industrial upgrading, expanding consumption and boosting employment.

The platform economy refers to the use of the internet and advanced technologies in business.

Examples include shared bikes, online shopping, food delivery services and online medical care.

In order to improve market access to the platform economy, registration of locations and names will be made more convenient, the guideline said.

Efforts will also be made to explore supervision rules that can adapt to the development of the platform economy and ensure fair competition.

While security should be the bottom line, enough space should be provided for the development of new forms of industry.

The construction of the latest information infrastructure, such as 5G, will also be encouraged to reduce average broadband charges for small and medium-sized enterprises and provide support for the development of the platform economy.

The guideline also called for protection of the legitimate rights and interests of participants in the platform economy, including operators and consumers.

New Shanghai FTZ area to bolster opening-up

A new area of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone will be built into a special economic zone with global influence and competitiveness to better serve the country's overall opening-up strategy, a notice published on Aug 6 said.

119.5 sq km

Dimension of the first phase of the plan for the Shanghai Free Trade Zone's new Lingang area

The State Council has sent a comprehensive plan for the Shanghai FTZ's new Lingang area to departments and governments at all levels, it said.

Under the plan, the new area will be set up to the south of Dazhi River, east of Jinhui Port, and south of Xiaoyangshan Island and Pudong International Airport.

The first phase will cover an area of 119.5 square kilometers.

The new section will match the standard of the world's most competitive free trade zones, and opening-up policies with strong global market competitiveness will be implemented there, the plan said.

According to the plan, by 2025, the Lingang area will have a relatively mature institutional system of investment and trade liberalization and facilitation.

By 2035, it will be built into a special economic zone with strong global market influence and competitiveness, becoming an important platform for the country to integrate with the global economy.

It will be supported in promoting investment and trade liberalization and facilitation, with a focus on the free flow of investment, trade, capital, transportation and employment, according to the plan.

Income tax shall be levied at a reduced rate of 15 percent for the first five years for qualified new enterprises engaged in manufacturing and research and development in key fields including integrated circuits, artificial intelligence, biomedicine and civil aviation, the plan said.

MO JINGXI

POLICY RESPONSE

Toll discounts for ETC devices to conserve energy

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Several ministry-level departments, including those responsible for transportation, civil affairs, human resources, and housing, have responded recently to issues of public concern.

Truck drivers encouraged to use ETC devices

Truck drivers using so-called ETC cards to pay tolls will no longer be eligible for discounts from the start of next year, the Ministry of Transport said on Wednesday.

But trucks that have electronic-toll-collection devices installed will enjoy discounts of no less than 5 percent.

The preferential policy was designed to encourage truck opera-

tors to install and use ETC devices, which would improve transport efficiency, promote energy conservation and reduce emissions, Wu Dejin, director of the ministry's highway department, said.

ETC cards allowed truck drivers to pay tolls without using cash, but could only be used at manned booths, Wu said.

He said the ministry would help to install ETC devices in trucks free of charge.

Move to help disabled live independently

China has released its first national standard for foster care services for intellectually, mentally and severely physically disabled people who are of working age — from 16 to the legal retirement age.

The standard, issued on Wednesday by agencies including the China Disabled Persons' Federation, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the State Administration for Market Regulation, will be put into effect on Jan 1.

According to the standard, foster care services for the disabled fall into five categories: daily care and nursing; self-care training; social adaptation training; motion function



training; vocational rehabilitation; and working skills training.

Feng Shanwei, a researcher with the China Disabled Persons' Federation, said the release of the standard is aimed at requiring foster care organizations to provide more services so that more disabled people can live independently, easing the burden on their families.

Express delivery firms urged to improve training

Express delivery companies should fully allocate and use their staff education expenses, and put 60 percent into training front line employees, a notice published on Aug 6 said.

Issued by the State Post Bureau and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, it said vocational training is important in supporting the high-quality develop-

ment of the express delivery industry, expanding employment and entrepreneurship, and bringing more convenience to the public.

Delivery companies should make employee training plans, carry out skills training that adapts to job requirements and organize other training activities such as skills competitions and online study, it said.

The notice also called for express delivery industry associations, leading delivery companies and industry training organizations to play a role in guiding and supporting small and medium-sized delivery companies to implement vocational training for employees.



Renovation boost for dilapidated homes

China will complete the renovation of 1.35 million dilapidated houses for poverty-stricken households in rural areas by the end of



June next year as part of efforts to fight poverty, a notice published on Thursday said.

The notice, jointly issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, the Ministry of Finance and the State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development, said renovation plans and allowance standards should be determined on a household-to-household basis to ensure targeted poverty alleviation.

It said four categories of poverty-stricken households that have been made a priority, including registered poor households and poor families with disabled members, will receive an extra 2,000 yuan (\$283) on top of the average renovation allowance of 14,000 yuan.

