

BUSINESS

Opening-up fuels global investor confidence

Number of new foreign-invested firms in China grows 12.1% y-o-y in first 4 months

By REN QI
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China has become more attractive as a global investment destination, especially in technology and innovation, attracting international businesses with its robust economic growth and creativity, said Rani Jarkas, chairman of the Swiss financial group Cedrus Group.

Having worked in Beijing for over 15 years and conducted business in many cities, Jarkas expressed confidence in China's global growth and innovation. "I think the Chinese economy will grow at a very consistent pace going forward, led by innovation, AI and other technologies," he said.

"China is one of the most important markets for businesspeople around the world, as investors believe it will continue to open up," Jarkas said, adding that mutual understanding is improving, with investors becoming increasingly aware of the opportunities the Chinese market offers and the returns companies can achieve.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, as of April 2025, a total of 18,832 new foreign-invested enterprises had been established nationwide this year, marking a year-on-year increase of 12.1 percent. The actual utilized foreign investment amounted to 320.78 billion yuan (\$44.66 billion).

In the first five months of this year, the number of foreign-invested enterprises with import and export performance exceeded 73,000, the highest during the same period in the past five years, with monthly import and export values maintaining growth for four consecutive months.

Jarkas hailed the Chinese government for its effective policies and incentives, especially in cities like Beijing. "There are many dimensions to these policies, such as streamlined approvals for new companies and initiatives to attract attention," he said.

Early this year, the Chinese government introduced the "2025 Action Plan for Stabilizing Foreign Investment" and announced that it will revise the "Catalogue of Industries Encouraged for Foreign



Investment", systematically expanding autonomous openings in sectors such as telecommunications, healthcare and education.

These measures encourage foreign capital to engage in equity investment in China and facilitate the accelerated implementation of major landmark foreign investment projects. Such policies have further optimized the business environment, bolstered the confidence of foreign enterprises and strengthened their willingness to invest.

"We're very inspired by these policies and believe they will continue to improve over time. We strongly recommend foreign companies explore opportunities in China, invest here and trust the government's support," Jarkas added.

Jarkas made these remarks during the opening ceremony of the 2025 Beijing CBD Forum on Wednesday. The event was attended by more than 20 representatives from Asian cities, over 30 representatives from international organizations and



business associations spanning more than 10 core industries, as well as members of the Global Business Districts (GBD) Innovation Club and the China CBD Alliance.

In addition to the improved investment environment, Jarkas highlighted better air quality and living conditions as key factors attracting more foreign businesses

to China. Siddharth Chatterjee, UN resident coordinator in China, echoed this sentiment, noting that major Chinese cities are serving as models for air quality optimization.

Taking Beijing as an example, Chatterjee pointed out that its air quality was once a major concern. "However, today we can see that the

air is remarkably clean," he said, giving a thumbs-up.

"As someone who lives here and often goes running — I frequently run half marathons — I personally feel that Beijing's air quality is excellent. This demonstrates three key factors: first, political will; second, sound public policies; and third, effective partnerships," he said.

China has taken bold steps in sustainable development. Its dual carbon goals — to achieve peak carbon emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060 — reflect the nation's

strong commitment to green development.

Meanwhile, China has taken a leading role globally in areas such as advancing green building standards, improving energy efficiency and integrating smart technologies into urban planning and management. These efforts are reshaping the urban experience and laying a solid foundation for long-term resilient development, Chatterjee said.

While environmental improvements have played a crucial role in enhancing China's attractiveness to foreign businesses, the country's robust economic policies and investment-friendly environment continue to be key drivers of foreign interest.

In a sideline interview with China Daily during the forum, Jarkas encouraged more foreign companies to visit China, learn about its rules and regulations, and experience its warm hospitality and rich culture. He emphasized that such visits would help businesses discover how China can meet their needs and support their growth.

Jarkas' views were echoed by John McLean OBE, chairman of the City of London branch of the Institute of Directors UK. McLean noted that the Chinese government's policy of extending the visa-free transit period to 240 hours has indirectly encouraged some foreign businesspeople to consider investing in China.

"Although the policy itself may not directly attract global businesses, some of my friends in the business sector decided to open branches in China after visiting the country as tourists and experiencing its high-potential markets firsthand," said McLean, who is also chairman of the China UK Business Development Center.

Since his first visit to China in 1999, McLean has witnessed tremendous progress in the country's modernization. He observed that the world today is filled with complexity and uncertainty. While global trade conflicts persist, nations are increasingly realizing that cooperation, rather than competition, is the key to fostering prosperity.

"A single tree does not make a forest," McLean said, quoting a Chinese proverb. He emphasized that as one of the world's largest economies, China will definitely continue working with the international community to create a more business-friendly investment environment and better serve foreign companies in local markets.

In major mining pivot, Guizhou powers economy from green sectors

TALKING BUSINESS

By Yang Jun

Guizhou province, located in China's southwestern highlands, is executing an economic transformation that defies the old resource-reliant development mode.

Known for its vast mineral wealth, Guizhou, which was once heavily engaged in low-value mining that scarred its mountainous landscape, now generates nearly half of its GDP from green sectors, such as big data, electric vehicles and recycling.

Demonstrating that natural wealth and ecological stewardship can coexist, the province has set a better example by managing to develop an innovative mining model, turning geological endowments into engines of sustainable prosperity.

High-tech mining

Among global resource regions striving for energy transition, Guizhou has gained the upper hand by promoting a mining sector based mainly on four principles — precise exploration, targeted ore allocation, refined extraction, and deep processing.

In this mode, the province aims, and has actually already started working, to rebuild the value chain in the mining sector and apply more green technologies to extract maximum

value from every metric ton of rock.

Beneath the province lies an estimated 80 billion tons of coal, historically burned for power or exported raw with minimal economic return. Nowadays, the province leads in converting this carbon resource into advanced materials. An example worth mentioning is the Meijin coal-coke-hydrogen comprehensive project in Liuzhi Special District in Guizhou's Liupanshui.

A major benefit of promoting the coal-coke-hydrogen model is that it can create a circular value chain — mining enables coking, coking generates gas for hydrogen, and hydrogen is used for clean energy. By leveraging clean coke technology, the plant can produce 3.8 million tons of metallurgical coke annually and refines some 40 million standard cubic meters of high-purity hydrogen, qualified for NEV use.

Every ounce of byproduct heat and gas is recycled into over 20 derivative products — from ammonium sulfate to specialty chemicals — creating businesses at every turn. In addition, each byproduct can spawn a downstream sector, attracting supporting enterprises, boosting tax revenue and creating jobs.

According to the local government, this circular approach is projected to generate 20 billion yuan (\$2.75 billion) in annual output while boosting growth in power generation, rail logistics, equipment manufacturing and advanced materials.

Shift of roles

Home to China's third-largest phosphate reserves, Guizhou has

shifted from being just a basic mineral trader to a high-tech battery materials provider. The Chuanyandong open-pit phosphate mine — with 87.95 million tons of recoverable ore — exemplifies this evolution. Using precision extraction, companies now isolate lithium iron phosphate and battery-grade iron phosphate while capturing companion elements like gallium and fluorine.

The payoff is stark: one in every three new EVs in China relies on batteries powered by Guizhou's refined phosphate. Industry giants BYD and CATL have established operations locally, followed by automakers like Geely setting up assembly plants. In 2024 alone, Guizhou's EV output surpassed 100,000 units.

In October, the first batch of "Made in Guizhou" electric buses, numbering 55, were exported to Laos. In November, China's first rail freight pilot for lithium battery transport between Guizhou, Sichuan and Chongqing was launched — a marvelous credential for the inland province on the nation's clean energy landscape.

Discoveries expected

In 2024, local mineral exploration authorities in Guizhou said they have discovered three large to medium-sized bauxite deposits, and with further discovery work underway, it is also expected to find two super-large and four large phosphate ore deposits.

Eyeing advantages in mineral deposits, prefecture-level regions in Guizhou are enhancing efforts in the energy industry and building it into a key pillar in strengthening the



A drone image shows a phosphate mining site in Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province. WU DONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

local economy, promoting green transition and facilitating development of industries with a more modernized framework.

For example, with rich phosphorus resources, Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture has focused on deep-processing material industries, with modern chemical and new energy battery materials as the leading sectors.

The potential economic value of the 10 major mineral resources in Guizhou is estimated to reach 113.9 trillion yuan, with extractable value reaching 62.4 trillion yuan. Refining mining for richer resources is heralding a bright future for the province's economy.

Beyond minerals

To date, Guizhou has certified 832 "Green Mines", and is rolling out

specialized cleanup programs for phosphogypsum, manganese slag and coal gangue.

While minerals anchor heavy industry, Guizhou's agricultural transformation proves that value addition applies equally to organic resources. In Jiangkou county, centuries-old tea traditions have birthed a booming matcha industry. Leveraging high-altitude fields and misty climates, the county produced over 1,200 tons of matcha in 2024, valued at 300 million yuan, with exports reaching Japan, the United States and France. A provincewide network now spans 22 counties, empowering nearly 100,000 tea growers through integrated farming and processing partnerships.

Last but not least, pushing ahead with Guizhou's industrial pivot should also include confronting

mining's environmental legacy. In 2021, voices of concern over bauxite damage in Xiuwen county catalyzed a restoration drive, culminating in the replanting of 76,000 trees by June 2022. The new Guizhou Mineral Resources Regulation, effective July 2024, mandates coordinated soil, water and vegetation remediation, legally binding operators to post-mining rehabilitation.

While the province still faces technological gaps and talent shortages, its pivot toward precision, intelligence and sustainability charts a course that will bring benefits to the whole industry. In a world torn between development and decarbonization, Guizhou has proved that even stone can be spun into green gold.

The writer is a senior reporter with China Daily.