



Chuanji Road in Shanghai's suburban Baoshan District is lined with stranded trucks. — All photos by Zhou Shengjie



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Driver Li San,
From Hebei Province

Tan Weiyun and Zhou Anna

Spare a thought for the legions of long-haul truck drivers who form the lifeline of highway commerce in China. Shanghai's long coronavirus lockdown has left many of them stranded in the city — sleeping in their vehicles, cooking meals at the roadside and even drinking water from fire hydrants.

The drivers have essentially been frozen in place for more than 50 days due to COVID-19 restrictions.

"I didn't bring any summer clothes," said driver Li San, 42, from the northern province of Hebei as he boiled congee, or rice porridge, in a small pot over a pavement fire. "It's hot now, so I've had to cut holes on my clothes to stay cool."

Li said he hasn't eaten any meat for almost three weeks, and taps into a nearby hydrant for water. His truck is parked at Luoqing Port on Chuanji Road, a road in Baoshan District that stretches to the mouth of the Yangtze River near the border with Jiangsu Province. These days, the roadway is lined with kilometers of stranded trucks.

Li was delivering mechanical equipment to Shanghai from Hebei when the lockdown began. He couldn't get a pass to drive home.

"I can't go anywhere now," he pointed out.

It's hard to understate the importance of truck traffic in China. Last November, the Ministry of Transport revealed that there were 17.3 million truck drivers in China, accounting for three quarters of the country's road haulage.