

Zone boosts Shandong's economic growth

Over 7,100 new companies, including nearly 4,000 private businesses, were registered in the industrial area in the first 10 months this year

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The Weifang Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone in East China's Shandong province will further enhance government service quality to support key business projects as part of its efforts to maintain stable economic growth.

Goertek, an acoustics solutions and smart hardware provider headquartered in Weifang, is one of the largest mobile earphone and microphone producers in the world in terms of annual sales volume.

Amid global trade turbulence, some of its clients considered partnering with other foreign suppliers to lower overall costs, according to the company. After visiting some suppliers in South Asia and Southeast Asia, the clients came back to Goertek because either the quality could not meet the requirement or the costs were too high.

Goertek's professional team is key to boosting its bargaining power in global trade.

Goertek has 10,000 development engineers and 10,000 technicians to guarantee the quality of their products. Those experts are the most valuable assets of the company and will not be affected by the changing global environment, the company said.

The zone, which shoulders responsibilities in supporting Shandong's efforts in replacing old economic drivers with new ones, has made great efforts to support Goertek's development.

Goertek is constructing a smart hardware industrial park with a total investment of 10 billion yuan (\$1.42 billion). The project is one of 10 key business projects recognized by the Weifang government this year.

Aimed at speeding up the construction, the zone established Zhu-an Ban, literally meaning special service teams, to give Goertek more support.

Under this model, support teams formed by government officials have been assigned the responsibilities to oversee key projects in the zone to ensure that any difficulties in the construction process can be solved in an efficient manner, according to the zone.

According to local officials, meetings are organized for key projects weekly so that companies can raise problems with officials, with all related government departments required to provide feedback in limited time.

Attracted by the improved government working efficiency, more companies are investing in industrial parks in the zone. A drone-centered industrial park, an aviation industrial park, a healthcare industrial park and an internet of things-themed industrial park are under construction.

Attracting business

The zone has long been encouraging leading companies to expand along its entire industrial chain. By doing so, it will help businesses to



Clockwise from top:

Six subsidiaries owned by Weichai exhibit their products at the second China International Import Expo in November. The first fleet of buses using Weichai hydrogen fuel cells are put into operation on Aug 23. Technicians debug equipment at a plant in the Weifang Aviation and Aerospace Industrial Park.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

7,197

the number of new companies registered in the zone from January to October

gain more bargaining power on one hand, and will help attract more businesses to the region on the other hand.

Weichai, one of the leading heavy trucks and component developers in China, is a pioneer in the zone in practicing this strategy.

The company demonstrated its overseas expansion achievements during the second China International Import Expo, which was held from Nov 5 to 10 in Shanghai with more than 3,800 companies from around the globe exhibiting, by showcasing products under six foreign brands including alternative-fuel power system developer Power Solutions International, Moteurs Baudouin and Linde Hydraulics.

A 20-meter-long patrol boat, built by Weichai-controlled Italian ship-



building company Ferretti Group, attracted great attention. The boat, the first exhibit to enter the expo venue in October, is equipped with two 1,900 horsepower engines that allow the vessel to reach a speed of 55 knots.

Weichai is building a new energy power industrial park for hydrogen fuel cells, a new energy innovation center, a Linde Hydraulics industrial park, a digitalized high-end engine production center and a facility to produce high-end large-bore engines in the zone to support regional industrial upgrading.

The company celebrated the groundbreaking of the Weichai International Engine Component Industrial Park in the zone on July 13.

The industrial park will be capable of serving more than 500 suppliers of Weichai upon completion. Factories of about 20 companies

including Germany's Knorr-Bremse will begin running by the end of this year, according to the zone government.

This year, the zone government innovated its investment attraction model by partnering with some professional capital investor to more effectively identify excellent companies.

Local officials said investment companies are more professional in identifying and evaluating top businesses in industries compared to governments.

Beijing-based TSC Laser Technology Development, specializing in 3D printing, was attracted to the zone under the new investment attraction model.

TSC's new plant in the aviation and aerospace industrial park in the zone will begin production at the end of November. Headquartered in Beijing, the company has



branches in Shenyang of Liaoning province, Xi'an of Shaanxi province and Tianjin municipality.

It chose to invest in the zone because of the connecting services provided by capital investors and premium government services, according to the company.

By the end of October, capital investors including Tsinghua Holdings Capital had introduced 18 projects to the zone. Capital investors will also introduce about 50 projects to the zone's aviation and aerospace industrial park in the next five years.

Strong support

For small and medium-sized enterprises in the expansion phase, the zone not only provides policy support but also strives to help them ease their financial burden.

Hoaco Automation Technology, which specializes in die-cutting

machinery, celebrated the opening of a 30,000-square-meter facility last year.

What made Song Guanghui, chairman of Hoaco, feel excited about it was that the factory was built by the government, and the company only needed to pay for rental costs.

Song said the company can focus on research and development in the upcoming years thanks to the reduced financial burden.

From January to the end of October, a total of 7,197 new companies had registered in the zone. Nearly 4,000 of them are privately owned, which represents an increase of 103.3 percent year-on-year.

The zone said it will continue to innovate its investment attraction model to develop industries such as life science, software information, new materials and internet of things.

Weifang's progress in improving its educational resources impresses teachers

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Yin Zhaomei, director of the English language teaching team at Dongming Middle School, is impressed by the rapid enhancement in infrastructure and education quality in the Weifang Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone.

"Apart from growing the number of students and teachers, schools strive to embrace new concepts and ideas to bring the best to students," Yin said.

Dongming Middle School was tiny and in poor condition when she became a member of it in 2006. Chalk and a blackboard were the only educational tools in each classroom, she said.

After 13 years of continuous expansion, Dongming Middle School now has more than 7,000 students and nearly 500 teachers.

In addition to the upgraded facilities, the school paid closer attention to improving teaching quality.

"I visited schools in Shanghai in May and July this year to learn about new education concepts and try to apply what I have learned in



From left: Foreign teachers at Weifang Hansen School hold a banner made during lessons. Children cheer at the campus in Qingping Kindergarten in the Weifang Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone.

Dongming," Yin said.

Dongming Middle School is taking measures to teach students to strengthen their problem-solving skills.

Teachers will not take a spoon-fed approach. Instead, students are encouraged to seek solutions through their own intuition.

In recent years, schools in the zone made great efforts to develop branded teaching programs. For instance, Beihai Education Group's ethical education program and Dongming Education Group's thinking skill training courses are all becoming well-recognized among local residents.

Education authorities of the zone said excellent teachers are key to supporting local education. Apart from attracting more excellent graduates to join the local education team, trainings are also provided to them so they can better adapt to their jobs.

In 2019, the zone welcomed 216

teachers. Among them, 18 are experienced teachers who have outstanding achievements in their careers. The number of teachers in the zone increased more than 12 percent over the past three years, according to Du Quanping, Party secretary of the zone's education bureau.

Xue Jiao, a teacher at Weifang



"Apart from growing the number of students and teachers, schools strive to embrace new concepts and ideas to bring the best to students."

Yin Zhaomei, a teacher from Dongming Middle School

Hi-tech Experimental School, said schools in the zone play important roles in supporting teachers who have just graduated from universities or colleges. Mentor programs are available in schools in the zone and experienced teachers are invited to provide one-on-one lessons for new teachers. Looking ahead, the zone will continue to partner with universities and research institutes to develop training programs for its teachers.