

Area builds up new economic drivers

Policy initiatives, including an 'innovation coupon', support emerging industries, **Yuan Shenggao** reports.

The Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone, a national economic development zone launched in 1991, has established a strong position among such zones in China over the past 20 years.

The zone ranked No 22 among 147 national-level development zones in terms of comprehensive development strength in 2017, an improvement on its ranking of No 23 in 2015.

The zone focused on deepening reform and promoting innovation in the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2010-15), vowing to continue to strengthen its economic position in China.

It has long been striving to maintain regional competitiveness. The zone has created an atmosphere in which staff members freely share opinions and turn ideas into reality in their daily work.

Over the past few years, the zone initiated a series of projects to create an ideal environment for both residents and businesses.

For instance, government officials are required to establish direct contact with businesses to help companies to solve problems in an effective manner. In addition to this commitment, efforts have been made to promote urban upgrades, as well as social and industrial development, to enhance security, quality of life and government service quality.

The zone has provided different types of support to businesses so they can be more focused on technological innovation.

Companies in the zone are provided with an "innovation coupon", a form of financial support, to reduce research and development costs.

In 2017, the zone lent a hand to support Shengrui Transmission's hybrid transmissions development projects by providing the company with the coupon. The coupon helped Shengrui to save significant R&D expenses, according to the company.

"The innovation coupon is a form of financial support provided to companies for free to encourage business innovation. We have been providing more support for more companies in recent years," said Chen Zhe, deputy director of Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone's technology bureau.

Chen said the innovation coupon is tailor-made based on companies' real life needs. It will help small and micro-enterprises to grow rapidly, help the zone to form an



Clockwise from top: **A technician** with Shengrui Transmission assembles an 8-gear auto transmission unit. **A resident** who benefited from the high-tech zone's urban upgrade cleans her new house. **Visitors enter** the GoerTek Green Town Living Museum, built by the Chinese acoustic company located in the Weifang high-tech zone. **A panoramic view** of the fast-growing Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone.

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industrial cluster and promote industrial upgrading.

In return, companies in the zone are striving to provide strong support to the zone in the process of replacing old economic drivers with new ones.

Weichai Group is a heavy truck engine and component developer and manufacturer based in the zone. It sold 620,000 engines and achieved more than 220 billion yuan

(\$34.99 billion) in sales revenue in 2017. The company has identified new energy as a new sector to explore in the next few years.

Tan Xuguang, president of Weichai, who is also president of Shandong Heavy Industry Group, said that the latter is responsible for Weichai New Energy Industrial Park's construction. The park is a key project in promoting

Shandong province's effort to replace old economic development drivers with new ones.

The industrial park is set to be the largest new energy motor production base, a world-leading hydrogen-power battery production base, a commercial vehicle new energy power train system production base, a world-leading new energy forklift production base, a light new

energy commercial vehicle production base and a new energy visual reality innovation center, according to the local authorities.

Supported by big projects, leading companies and a premier business environment, the zone said it is confident about achieving outstanding results in promoting industrial upgrading and transformation. Figures from the zone show

Better services improve businesses' satisfaction

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone sent representatives to visit Shandong Newocean Software in January, in order to find out how the area could improve and provide better services for businesses located there.

"We had a long talk and focused on discussing how to better the zone's business environment," said Wang Shukun, chairman of the board of Shandong Newocean Software. "Companies do need this type of one-on-one talk."

Newocean is not the only company to be visited by representatives from the zone this year. Staff members from 18 government departments at the high-tech zone spent two weeks visiting 328 companies to collect their opinions on the local business environment in January.

Statistics from the zone show that 280 companies were satisfied, while 35 companies were not.

It is not the first time for the zone to collect companies' feedback on its business environment. At the end of 2017, the zone, one of the first national economic development zones in China, carried out a telephone survey and an online evaluation to collect opinions about its business environment.

A total of 292 companies participated in the telephone interview, giving feedback on seven sectors: policy, government service, market, legal, finance and social aspects and the new business-government relationship.

The zone also invited 538 companies to participate in the online evaluation to assess the performance of 53 government departments. The evaluation covered five areas — working efficiency, service quality, service attitude, law-based administration and working style.

It was revealed that 73 companies expressed dissatisfaction through the telephone interview and online evaluation.

The heads of the relevant government departments were required to visit those companies which expressed dissatisfaction in 2017 and 2018 to learn more about the businesses' demands and solve problems in the most effective manner.

Shandong Newocean Software chairman Wang was satisfied with the zone's efforts in creating such a communication mechanism.

"The supporting activities offered us chances to share our opinions. I hope there are more such activities," Wang said. "We also hope the zone will be more fault-tolerant of problems emerging in our development process."

Deng Laiqing, deputy Party chief at Weifang Software Innovation and Startups Service Center, visited 12 companies in January.

"Market, finance and professionals are the most common factors considered by local businesses," Deng said.

Companies have different demands on services and resources, requiring the government to provide professional services based on firms' real demand, he added.

"Better service brings better development," said Guo Hui, deputy head of the zone's performance evaluation office. "We launched those visiting activities to enable government departments to become aware of their shortcomings so as to create a first-class business environment for companies."

Liu Yinghong contributed to this story.

22nd place

Weifang high-tech zone's ranking among 147 such zones for comprehensive development strength in 2017

13 projects

from the zone made the list for provincial-level plans to replace old economic growth drivers

that the industrial upgrading 13 projects of companies such as Shengrui and GoerTek, have been listed in provincial-level plans about replacing old economic growth drivers with new ones. Seventeen projects have been included in the first batch of 600 provincial-level key projects to promote the replacement of economic drivers.

The zone now has 337 big projects with total investment exceeding 200 billion yuan.

Sun Wenfeng, director of the zone's economic development bureau, said that the zone will continue to promote the development of a modern industrial system that allows coordinated development among the real economy, technology innovation, modern finance and human resources. The zone will focus on replacing economic drivers, accelerating smart industrial upgrades, striving to build an export-oriented economy and developing new competitive factors in the service sector.

Looking ahead, the local authorities said the zone will continue to seek development opportunities, upgrade traditional industries and promote new emerging industries, aiming for a bright future in the upcoming years.

Zhou Jinjiang contributed to this story.



Dynamic Weichai Group releases bus with latest powertrain system

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Weichai Group — a company specializing in the design, manufacturing and sales of diesel engines — has just released a tour bus equipped with its new powertrain system that meets exacting Euro VI emission standards.

The Euro VI standards were issued by the European Union to reduce levels of harmful exhaust emissions, both from petrol and diesel automobiles.

The powertrain of an automobile comprises the engine, exhaust system, transmission, drive shaft, suspension and wheels.

The company, headquartered in the Weifang Hi-tech Industrial Development Zone, in the city of Weifang in Shandong province, released the bus in Hong Kong on March 28.

It is Weichai's latest efforts to speed up its provision of customized high-end products to the international market.

The first tour bus, produced by its subsidiary Xiamen Fengtai Bus and Coach International, was delivered to Hong Kong's Great Leader Bus Holdings during the release ceremony.

Weichai Group President Tan Xuguang and more than 100 international clients from the public transportation, tourism and long-distance bus services sectors participated in the ceremony.

Fengtai is the Weichai Group unit which focuses on developing new energy hybrid coaches, pure electric coaches and low emission luxury coaches that meet the Euro V and Euro VI emission standards.

All its products are supplied to developed countries including the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.

Tan said his group developed the first powertrain for commercial vehicles in the world in 2005, and in so doing changed a "difficult situation" for China which up until then had no control over the core technologies related to heavy-duty powertrains.

Tan said the debut of the new powertrain system in Hong Kong marked a new stage, in that a Chinese company now controlled the most advanced powertrain development technologies and would lead the market in their development in the coming years.



Tan Xuguang (left), Weichai Group's president, hands a model of the company's tour bus with a new powertrain system meeting Euro VI emission standards to Dick Yip, general manager of Hong Kong's Great Leader Bus Holdings. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tan said the three core components in the powertrain — engine, transmission and axles — were all produced in China.

He said Weichai had paid close attention to refining their technologies over the past decade, investing a total of 15 billion yuan (\$2.39 billion) on engine development.

In addition to that major financial commitment, the company has also strived to improve its customer services. The company has established

an effective automotive after-market service platform that undertakes to provide after-sales services throughout the life cycle of its products.

Weichai has established 31 overseas offices and 398 service centers internationally, to provide repair and maintenance services to global clients.

According to Weichai, the 12-meter tour bus delivered on March 28 was tailor-made to the requirements of its client, Hong Kong bus services pro-

15b yuan

Weichai Group has invested on engine development over the past decade

vider Great Leader Bus Holdings Ltd.

The bus is lightweight, and its other features include high safety and reliability, fuel economy, and a big interior space.

"Weichai and Fengtai's core competitiveness is that we can accurately understand our clients needs and provide a quick response to their demands," said Lin Jian, deputy general manager of Fengtai.

Dick Yip, general manager of Great Leader, who drove the bus at its March 28 release, said that Fengtai's buses had strong competitiveness in overall performance and were more cost-effective compared with some European brands.

"The tour bus was tailor-made so it can perform well in Hong Kong, which is known for its hilly landscapes and humid climate," Lin said.

"They were produced to

compete with first-tier brands such as Mercedes-Benz."

Fengtai has established a research and development team consisting of experts from the US, Canada, Australia and countries in Europe. Those engineers not only bring in advanced design idea, but also bring the latest production technologies to Fengtai, deputy general manager Lin Jian said.

Nowadays, Fengtai has a product portfolio covering 26 categories with 140 types of vehicle models.

Lin added that Fengtai plans to introduce 8 meter and 12-meter high-end tour buses to Hong Kong in the upcoming years.

In 2007, Fengtai delivered 500 customized buses to overseas markets and generated over 20 million yuan in profits.

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