

# Getting back to business as outbreak tackled

Province refuses to let epidemic get in the way of trading or local economy

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As the nationwide battle against the novel coronavirus epidemic came to a critical stage, authorities in North China's Shanxi province applied equal emphasis to disease control and economic growth.

At a meeting in the provincial capital of Taiyuan on Feb 14, Lou Yangsheng, Party secretary of Shanxi, required that local entities resume normal production and business, while applying strict measures on disease control.

The Party chief stressed the importance of ensuring supplies of products crucial to people's livelihoods and disease control.

On the same day of the meeting, Lou visited farms in Dongyang township, Jinzhong city, to learn about the development of local farming activities and agricultural products supply.

He called on local governments to address problems such as the supply of seeds, fertilizers and farming machines, as well as ensure smooth channels for farming products' transportation.

"Spring is the crucial period for a year's farming activities. Agricultural production cannot be delayed despite the challenge caused by the coronavirus outbreak," Lou said.

This year is likely to be a good year for grain production in Shanxi, according to local agricultural experts.

"The weather this winter, which featured more frequent snow, will benefit growth of wheat," said Liu Zhifeng, an expert at the Shanxi Agricultural Technology Promotion Station.

On Feb 6, farmers in Xiezhou township in Yuncheng city were busy weeding on the fields.

"The wheat grows better with higher temperatures and more snow this winter. It looks set that we will have a good harvest in early summer," said Hou Biewa, a local farmer.

"We had a quiet Spring Festival because of the outbreak of the epidemic. But I believe it will be over eventually and the wheat on the field will be the hope of our better lives," Hou said.

In Chengzi village in Xingxu county, there are more than 130 hectares of greenhouses for various vegetables.

"We are supplying vegetables to cities in Shanxi and the rest of the



A farmer works in his greenhouse orchard in Pinglu county. LIU WENLI / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: A gas company worker in Taiyuan checks equipment to ensure smooth supplies to local households. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY  
Farmers in Qingxu county collect vegetables that are ready to be sold in Shanxi and the rest of the country. YUE SHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



country. We hope we can play a role in fighting against the epidemic by stabilizing food supply," said Wang Zhimin, a farmer in the village.

### Farming activities

The county of Qingxu is well prepared for farming activities this spring.

According to Xingxu's agricultural bureau, local agricultural service companies now have 300 metric tons of seeds, 6,000 tons of fertilizers and more than 1,300 farming

machines in place to help farmers begin their work.

"We require these companies to send disease-prevention messages to farmers while offering farming-related services," a local agricultural official said.

Since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia in December, authorities in Shanxi have held several meetings, drafting plans to ensure both disease control and normalization of business activities.

According to the Shanxi Provin-

cial Industrial and Information Department, more than 44 percent of the local businesses above designated scale — with an annual sales revenue surpassing 20 million yuan (\$2.86 million) — have resumed their operations.

At a plant of the Taiyuan-based Taiyuan Heavy Machinery Group, workers are busy producing train wheels.

According to Li Haitao, deputy general manager of Taiyuan Rail Transit Equipment, a subsidiary of

the group, his company can produce more than one train wheel a minute.

"The products will be delivered to more than 50 countries according to our orders secured last year," Li said.

"At this critical moment, we have implemented the strictest protective measures to ensure the health of our workers and the smooth delivery of products," he added.

Li said the company's exports have not been disrupted by the epi-

demic. They are securing more orders for 2020.

"During the first two months, the value of our new overseas orders increased about 10 percent compared with the same period last year," Li said.

### Medical supplies

The production of medical supplies is of paramount significance in Shanxi to respond to the nationwide emergency.

Since late January, local manufacturers have resumed production of such products as medicines, face masks and protective clothing.

Xinhua Chemicals is the first local medical supplies company to resume production in the province.

As a result of its 500-plus employees working on normal and additional shifts, Xinhua Chemicals can now produce 5,000 medical masks daily, according to the company.

Another major medical supplies producer is Jihua 3534 Garments based in Wenxi county, Shanxi province.

"With more than 500 workers working on three shifts and 10 production lines operating at full capacity, we can currently produce more than 10,000 disposable protective garments every day," said Wang Qingcai, executive board chairman of the company.

There is also cross-industry collaboration for the production of medical supplies.

For instance, Bingjuan Garments based in Linyi county is using the germ-free workshop of local Aoer Pharmaceuticals to produce medical protective clothing. It took only 48 hours to start production after equipment was installed and raw materials bought.

Stabilizing supplies of daily necessities to ensure that residents' livelihoods are not disrupted by the epidemic is also an important part of the current economic operations.

As many residential communities are locked down to prevent the spread of the virus, a number of retailers are offering delivery services to residents.

To avoid crowding in areas like supermarkets, Taiyuan-based agricultural products chain Hongxin called on outlets to deliver vegetables, food and other daily necessities to the gates of neighboring communities.

"We have delivered more than 1,000 tons of food to communities in Taiyuan at reasonable prices during this Spring Festival. This is a two-fold increase compared with the same period of last year," said Zhao Xuefeng, president of Hongxin.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.



International students in Taiyuan University of Technology follow online classes in their dormitory. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## International students staying safe in Shanxi

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Life is still safe for international students in North China's Shanxi province, despite the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pneumonia in the country.

According to the Shanxi Provincial Education Department, there were 748 international students in Shanxi as of February.

"We have paid close attention to every international student since January and we require every school to take effective measures to make sure that they can live and study safely in Shanxi," said Han Ruiyong, chief of international cooperation and exchanges at the provincial education department.

Sharifi Shahir, an Afghan student studying at Taiyuan University of Technology, said his life hadn't been disrupted by the epidemic

thanks to the school's measures for disease prevention and ensuring enough supplies.

"The school takes our temperatures and we report our health conditions every day. Our dormitories are disinfected every day and the school's logistics department sends us food and other daily necessities every two days," Shahir said.

Al-Maqtari Ahmed Ali Mohammed Hasan, a Yemeni student at Shanxi University, said the school's teachers have shown great consideration for the international students.

"They send us masks and messages of caution. Despite strict preventive measures, life is as usual here in Shanxi," he said. "China is a great country and I believe it can win the battle against the epidemic."

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**Al-Maqtari Ahmed Ali Mohammed Hasan**, a Yemeni student at Shanxi University

Nigeria is also a student at Shanxi University. She said she talks to her parents on the phone every day, letting them know she is "safe and sound in China."

A total of 106 international students are remaining during their winter vacation at Shanxi Medical University in Taiyuan.

Among them are Safa Ashiq, Marva Ashiq and Amna Ashiq, three sisters from Pakistan, studying in the same class.

They planned to visit Pingyao, Datong and Beijing but the trips were canceled because of the epidemic.

"We told our parents that the school is the safest place because of the preventive measures," Marva Ashiq said.

To ensure their education is not disrupted by the disease, there are a number of online classes available at the university.

Zafar Muhammed Waleed Bin, a Pakistani student at Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine, has been paying close attention to the development of the epidemic in China.

He said he believed China can eventually win the battle because of the Chinese people's courage in the face of difficulties.

Li Linxia contributed to this story.

## Artists revive forgotten techniques

By YUAN SHENGGAO

*Fahua*, whose techniques used for decorating color-glazed porcelain had been lost for more than 300 years, has been brought back to life by innovative craftsmen in Shanxi province.

The term *fahua* refers to Chinese porcelain wares with bold, deep blue decoration and glazes in turquoise, purple, green, yellow and white. *Fahua* wares are regarded as the ceramic versions of cloisonné, where the design elements are separated by copper wires.

Porcelain featuring these techniques is fired at lower temperatures with the different colored glazes and enamels applied to individual areas created by the slip lines.

At an exhibition during the fourth Shanxi Cultural Industry Expo held in Taiyuan in December, visitors got an up-close look at *fahua* wares created by local craftsmen.



A featured exhibit was a *fahua* pot decorated with egrets at a lotus pond, designed and fired by Zhang Yongyong.

A visitor named Deng Hongxia said she was astonished by the beauty and intricacies of the work.

"The gem-blue color is the most impressive. It's so deep blue that it gives a sense of remote antiquity," Deng said.

The *fahua* techniques have been revived from those that had been lost for about 300 years, Zhang said, adding that it is the result of a decade of hard work.

Zhang and his research team began to study the *fahua* techniques in 2005, after becoming obsessed with *fahua* wares on the



Visitors take photos of a *fahua* pot on exhibit at the fourth Shanxi Cultural Industry Expo. HU XUGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

antique market in Changzhi, Shanxi province.

After studying historical documents, Zhang learned that the porcelain ware is a homonym of religious solemnity used in Buddhist ceremonies.

Zhang and his colleagues visited many museums and libraries, and talked with many elder craftsmen in the process of their research.

He learned about the firing process and the application of colored glazes in different areas separated by raised slip lines — the most difficult of the *fahua* techniques.

"We had more than 10,000 tests and trials for the technique before we successfully made one in 2017," Zhang said.

Zhang's team can now apply more than 50 colors to *fahua* wares.

Zhen Guomin, 67, is another craftsman contributing to the revival of the techniques.

He began studying *fahua* in 2003.

Like Zhang, Zhen also discovered the secrets in the coloring process. He used the raised slip lines to inhibit enamels of different colors from flowing into each other.

Zhen and his son Zhen Shiqiang, who is a member of his team, have been named master inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage in Shanxi by the provincial government.

"Instead of inheritors, we are actually innovators in intangible cultural assets. Innovation can play a big role in preserving and reviving historical heritage," said Zhen, the father.

Bai Jie contributed to this story.