

Environmental focus lifts public happiness

Cleaned-up Fenhe River is brought back to life and 2.8-million-hectare reforested areas bring joy and beauty to local residents and visitors



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhao Dan, a resident of Taiyuan, the capital city of North China's Shanxi province, has developed a habit over recent years to cycle along the Fenhe River to her workplace in the morning and cycle back home the same route.

"To commute by bike is both healthy and environmentally friendly," Zhao said. "It's also a pleasant journey when seeing the ever-improving environment of the Fenhe River."

A major tributary of the Yellow River, Fenhe is the second-largest in Shanxi province.

"When seeing the clear water and the lush trees and grasses along the river, and breathing in the fresh air, I always feel grateful for the local authorities' efforts in improving the environment," Zhao said.

Chen Xiaoli, another Taiyuan resident, said the most attractive part of the Fenhe River is the Jinyang Bridge section. Jinyang Bridge, featuring two rainbow-shaped arches, has

become a landmark on the river and one of the top attractions in the city since its construction in 2019, according to Chen.

"It is especially beautiful in the evening when the lights are on and the rainbow arches are reflected on the clear water of the river," Chen said.

The resident said the site was a berth for boats to shuttle passengers across the river in ancient times. "I was told the place used to be one of the top attractions in ancient times, which was called 'evening ferries on Fenhe' by sightseers," Chen said.

"Fenhe was almost a dry river decades ago. If there was some water, it stank," Chen recalled. "I couldn't imagine how a dry, dirty river was associated with a sightseeing attraction."

She said, in the past, living near the river was unpleasant, which meant few people jogged or walked along it. Chen said changes began to take place in the late 1990s. Taiyuan launched an environmental improvement project for the river in 1998, with local authorities focusing their efforts on pollution control and increasing water supply to the river.

Fenhe was initially revitalized when water from an upper stream

was continuously supplied to the water course in Taiyuan in 2000.

Efforts have since continued in pollution control, ecological restoration and landscaping development. It has turned the region along the river into a pleasant habitat for both wildlife and human beings, and an attractive scenic belt for visitors and locals.

Shanxi began to improve the entire river, at a length of more than 710 kilometers, in 2017. It focused on increasing the water supply and improving ecological environment.

A water diversion project starting from the Wanjiashai Dam, on the upper reaches of the Yellow River, began to supply water to Fenhe that year. Statistics from the Shanxi Department of Water Resources show that the project has supplied more than 1.2 billion cubic meters of water to Fenhe over the past five years.

Fenhe, nurtured by the Yellow River, eventually empties itself back into the Yellow River at the village of Miaoqian in Wanrong county.

The estuary in Miaoqian is now a favored site for photographic drone operators. It features the convergence of the crystal-clear Fenhe and the yellow water of the larger river, as well as a vast span of wetland that offers habitat to a large number of birds and other animals.



As the ancient attraction of 'evening ferries on Fenhe' has been resurrected in the wake of the river's revival, Jinyang Bridge is now a landmark destination in Taiyuan. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

The monitoring station at the estuary shows an ever-improving water quality of Fenhe year-by-year.

Since June 2020, water quality rated below class-4 has never been recorded at the station. The 2022 statistics show the rate of class-3 water quality reached 52.4 percent.

Class-4 is the standard for water that can be used by industries and class-3 is for water that can be used for irrigation and aquaculture.

Improving rivers is one of the priorities on the environmental protection agenda in Shanxi. Similar programs have been launched for other rivers in the province.

Shanxi's innovative practice to harness and improve its rivers is to appoint chiefs for each river. A river chief is usually the head of the local government, responsible for each section of the river. They can be the head of a township, county, city or

provincial government.

Shanxi's waterways are now taken care of by more than 16,000 river chiefs at village level; more than 4,000 river chiefs at township level; about 900 river chiefs at county level; and about 80 river chiefs at city level or provincial level.

In addition to improving rivers, Shanxi's recent efforts in environmental protection include greening its land and curbing soil erosion.

Niu Jianming, a forest patrol worker at the Xuegongling Nature Reserve in the eastern Shanxi city of Yangquan, has seen his role change over the past few decades.

"I used to be a worker in the Guandishan Forestry Bureau 20 years ago and logging was my job," Niu said. "When most of the hills and mountains owned by the bureau became barren, there were no trees to cut and I was afraid I would be sacked."

"Then I was assigned to the nature reserve with a mission to protect the forests. I'm happy with the change of role in my career."

"The job of planting and protecting trees is more enjoyable than cutting trees. Your hope expands with the expansion of green land, which steadily ensures your job and your benefits. The benefits to all the people involved and people in the neighborhood also grow as a result of improving the environment," Niu said.

Statistics from the Shanxi Forestry and Grassland Administration show that the province has planted 2.78 million hectares of trees since 2012. Its forest coverage reached 23.57 percent by the end of 2020, higher than the national average.

Zhang Liyuan and Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Summit shows potential of digital development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The North China province of Shanxi is welcoming a new boom of investment in the digital economy sector, organizers of the 2022 Jinyang Lake Digital Economy Development Summit announced recently.

The summit, held from Aug 18-20, saw the signing of agreements for 154 projects in the digital economy sector, with combined pledged investment totaling 93.62 billion yuan (\$13.65 billion). A number of breakthrough achievements in research and development were also announced during the three-day event, according to the organizers.

Previously called Jinyang Lake Integrated Circuits and Software Industries Summit, the event entered its third edition this year.

Participants in the summit said they viewed this event as a showcase of the fruitful development of Shanxi's digital economy and a gateway to new business opportunities.

Gai Longjia, co-president and chief operating officer of software developer Neusoft, which is based in Shenyang, capital city of Liaoning province, said his company has been a "loyal participant" in the summit in the last three years and its interest in the event is stimulated by the huge market potential in Shanxi.

"Shanxi has rich application sce-

narios and a beneficial ecosystem for the digital economy," Gai said. "There are huge demands for digital technologies and solutions for its economic transformation, especially in the areas of intelligent mining, e-government, smart healthcare and industrial digitalization."

Shanxi is implementing an economic transformation campaign that aims to upgrade its coal-mining and resource-consuming industries and foster emerging industries as new growth drivers.

The digital economy is regarded by local authorities as one of the leading, strategic emerging industries as it is playing a significant role in upgrading Shanxi's multiple industries, improving government administration and changing people's lifestyles.

In 2021, the total operational revenue of Shanxi's core industries in the digital economy was 200 billion yuan, accounting for nearly 10 percent of the provincial GDP, according to the Shanxi Statistics Bureau.

A number of new R&D institutions, including the Taiyuan-Xinzhou data traffic research lab, a national-level public service platform for artificial intelligence and the smart mining labs of Huawei and China Unicom, announced their operations during the event. Local officials said these R&D facilities will inject new energy into Shanxi's high-



From top: Business representatives and local officials attend a project-signing ceremony at the Jinyang Lake Digital Economy Development Summit. SHI XIAOBO / FOR CHINA DAILY
An exhibition at the Jinyang Lake summit showcases Shanxi's latest development in the digital economy. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

quality, sustained development.

Shanxi's new achievements in digital-driven development were announced during the summit.

One eye-catching area in the use of digital technologies is the coal-mining sector. Statistics show that a total of 23 smart coal mines and 572 intelligent mining shafts have been developed in Shanxi in recent years, which means that more than 70 percent of the province's coal output are

produced by advanced, digitalized facilities.

Digital technologies have also contributed to improving governments' administrative efficiency. In Shanxi, more than 90 percent of the administrative service procedures can now be handled online, according to officials.

Jin Shuaini contributed to this story.

Tasting event exhibits unique flavors of Fenjiu

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Xinghuacun Fenjiu, a renowned white liquor producer based in the Shanxi city of Fenjiu, hosted a tasting event in the Canadian city of Toronto on July 18, giving guests an opportunity to taste the new Fenjiu-branded white liquor, or *baijiu*, varieties prior to their launch into the local market.

More than 60 guests, including local politicians, business leaders and residents, attended the event.

Many guests said they were impressed with the unique taste of Fenjiu liquor and the cultural significance of *baijiu* from Shanxi after they were told its long history.

Local archaeological discoveries show that the production of the alcoholic beverage in the township of Xinghuacun in the Shanxi city of Fenyang, where Xinghuacun Fenjiu is based, dates back more than 6,000 years. A weaving-spindle-shaped bottle, containing alcoholic beverage remains from that period, was discovered in the past century and is



Guests attend Xinghuacun Fenjiu's tasting event in Toronto, Canada on July 18. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

now exhibited in the museum of the company, representing material evidence of its long history.

Because of the discoveries, researchers said Xinghuacun might be the origin of China's alcoholic beverage industry.

Xinghuacun Fenjiu is one of the pioneering *baijiu* companies of China to go global.

After it won a gold prize at the Pan-

ama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, the United States, in 1915, Fenjiu-branded white liquor began to attract the attention of international buyers. Since then, several Fenjiu brands, including Fenjiu and Zhuyeqing, have become popular in overseas markets. The brands were first sold to Southeast Asia and East Asia and then to Europe and the Americas.

Fenjiu-branded liquor made its market debut in Canada in 1997. It first won popularity in the Canadian-Chinese community and was gradually accepted by others in the following years.

A highlight of the tasting event is a charity donation for a local children's hospital, showing Xinghuacun Fenjiu's efforts to integrate with the local community.

In addition to Xinghuacun Fenjiu, the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce in Toronto — the company's partner for this event — and guests on the site donated money to the hospital via a local charity organization.

To date, Xinghuacun Fenjiu has developed presence in more than 200 cities in 80-plus foreign countries. Its recent overseas marketing campaigns including experience events in the French province of Seine-Saint-Denis in early July and in the Spanish city of Valencia in late June.

Zhao Qingyuan contributed to this story.

Dozens of big projects flock to economic zone

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Despite the summer heat in early August, construction workers were busy working in the Yangqu Transformation and Development Industrial Park in the Shanxi provincial capital of Taiyuan.

There is a boom in construction to meet demands from an increasing number of investment projects funded by businesses from across the country, according to Lu Qiusheng, vice-mayor of Taiyuan.

The Yangqu industrial park is part of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone, which was founded on Dec 29. Lu is also the director of the Taiyuan operational center of the IEZ.

He said the Taiyuan section of the IEZ has welcomed 68 large investment projects since its establishment. These include projects funded by Chinese battery giant Contemporary Amperex Technology, Shenzhen-based liquid crystal display producer HKC, and Taiyuan-based Tongze Heavy Industry.

The official said the zone's investment promotion office is also in talks with investors for another 89 big projects.

The IEZ is part of the new Taiyuan-Xinzhou integration program, which aims to build a city cluster in the center of Shanxi and foster a new engine for growth.

"The central Shanxi city cluster is one of the 19 city clusters proposed by the nation's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25)," Lu said. "And Taiyuan is at the center of the cluster that includes cities to its north, south, east and west."

Taiyuan was chosen as the leader of a national-level city cluster because of its growing economic strength, according to Lu.

In the first half of this year, Taiyuan reported a year-on-year GDP increase of 3.5 percent, ranking 12th among 42 major cities in China.

Lu said Taiyuan has garnered such strength due to its success in adjusting its industrial structure and growth pattern.



The Double Pagodas Park is a favored destination for relaxing and sightseeing in Taiyuan. GUO YANJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY