

# Long-term investments in Shanxi's well-being

Universal healthcare, compulsory education and financial assistance for vulnerable people all contributing to improve locals' life satisfaction



By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Over the past 10 years, the North China province of Shanxi has increased its investment in initiatives that improve livelihoods, aiming to strengthen people's sense of gain, happiness and security.

One sector that Shanxi has devoted much energy to is healthcare, according to an official in the Shanxi provincial government.

The official said now that it has established a medical care insurance system to help residents access free and universal services, the province is shifting emphasis to allocating better resources to the sector and helping to improve the levels of service for medical institutions and medical workers.

Shanxi's medical care insurance system, which is sponsored by the governments at various levels, now covers more than 32 million residents, or 95 percent of its population.

The official said that the use of digital technologies makes it possible for Shanxi's medical institutions to use advantageous resources throughout the country.

On July 27, for instance, medics at the cardiovascular center of the Hospital Affiliated to Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine, based in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, attended an online conference. There, experts from Beijing's Xiyuan Hospital gave suggestions on treating difficult and complicated cases.



Dozens of students from a primary school in Taiyuan have fun by kicking footballs on campus. SHI XIAOBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

The hospital in Taiyuan has cooperated with Xiyuan Hospital for several years, especially in the fields of cardiovascular, brain and blood diseases, tumors and rheumatology.

In addition to holding remote diagnosis meetings regularly, Xiyuan Hospital has dispatched experts to the Taiyuan hospital to share their expertise with doctors.

While introducing resources from across the country, Shanxi's leading hospitals, mostly in Taiyuan, have branched out throughout the province. They have helped medical institutions in smaller cities and rural areas improve their services.

For instance, the Shanxi Bethune Hospital, the Shanxi Provincial Cancer

Hospital and the Hospital Affiliated to the SUCM have built branches in the cities of Datong, Changzhi, Linfen and Yuncheng to share resources.

In Shanxi, a 5G-enabled remote diagnosis system plays an increasingly important role in boosting medical services across county-level regions.

Backed by emerging technologies, leading local hospitals and medical companies, some counties and districts in Shanxi — including the counties of Jiexiu, Zezhou, Xiaoyi and Yicheng, as well as Xinghualing district in Taiyuan — have grown into national or provincial demonstration areas for the comprehensive development of healthcare industries.

In Shanxi as a whole, internet tech-

nologies have helped to build a unified medical insurance system, with the development of a provincial network for the sharing of data and information.

Another area of livelihood improvement that Shanxi has highlighted is education.

After developing a compulsory education system from primary to junior middle school students, Shanxi is now extending universal education services to kindergartens.

Local statistics show the province has a total of 2,961 kindergartens enjoying universal educational services. It means that even low-income families can afford high-quality pre-school education.

The province has also increased its investment to improve the quality of compulsory education. Over the past 10 years, Shanxi has channeled a total of 12 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) to upgrade educational facilities for primary and junior middle schools. By adding accommodation, a total of 1,550 schools in the rural areas are now able to enroll boarding students.

Shanxi is now promoting a strategy to balance educational development between big and small cities, and between urban and rural areas.

On Aug 3, a new school in the district of Yuci in Jinzhong city began to enroll students. The school was established by Shanxi Normal University,

according to an agreement it signed with the Jinzhong city government on April 1.

The SNU, based in Taiyuan, is the top university in the province for training teachers. By founding the school, it means Jinzhong is able to enjoy educational resources from the provincial capital.

The school can offer lessons to about 3,500 students, according to local officials.

Leading educational institutions in Taiyuan and other big cities, mostly middle schools, are also branching out, aiming to share their resources with smaller cities and rural areas across Shanxi.

The province's new endeavor to improve educational quality is to implement the "double reduction" campaign. The initiative eases the burdens of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students in compulsory education. Researchers believe the campaign can help with the all-around development of students. They are encouraged to take part in more physical activities that are good for their health and to develop personal interests.

In addition to healthcare and education, Shanxi's efforts to improve people's livelihoods include a pension system for the elderly and an assistance system for the underprivileged, such as the unemployed and disabled.

Local statistics show that the province's basic pension system covered more than 26 million people by the end of 2021. During 2012-22, Shanxi invested a total of 53.87 billion yuan in offering assistance to underprivileged residents.

*Qin Yang, Li Linxia and Gao Jianhua contributed to this story.*



Yangquan has developed into a suitable place for living and setting up business as a result of the transformation over the past decade. ZHANG ZHEYUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Yangquan city transforms into sustainable economy

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

The city of Yangquan in east Shanxi province, which used to be a renowned coal-mining base in China, is successfully transforming itself into a sustainable economy.

The city began its transformation about 10 years ago and its economic structure now has been upgraded to cover such industries as new materials, new generation of information technology, new energy, modern services and modern agriculture.

The digital technologies have played a crucial role in the transformation, bringing fundamental changes to industrial development, urban management and lifestyles.

For city residents, their direct impression of Yangquan's transformation is that the city has become smarter.

The city was among the earliest to embrace autonomous driving practices in Shanxi.

The residents are now very familiar with a car-hiring app called *Luo-bo Kuaipao*, which literally means "fast-running turnip". With a click of the app on the smartphone and entry of the pickup location and destination, the commuter is highly likely to be served by an autonomous-driving car which could take him or her to any destination safely.

Yangquan is one of the first pioneering intelligent cities in Shanxi, with many aspects of urban management, including traffic, administrative service, healthcare and community governance improved by digital technologies.

The city also sees digital technologies as an effective way to upgrade its industries.

Xinyuan Coal Mine, a subsidiary of Yangquan-based Huayang Group, for instance, has channeled heavy investments into its intelligent facilities for coal mining.

The coal mine's production sites are now connected to 5G networks.

"The connection allows us to monitor and control mining processes in shafts as deep as 500 meters below the ground, helping increase efficiency and improve safety substantially," said Cui Maosheng, a technician at Xinyuan. "In the past, all monitoring was carried out by workers, who needed to walk 5-8 kilometers a day in the shafts. Now, all monitoring can be done with 5G-connected robots."

Yangquan is also using digital technologies to modernize its agricultural industry. Tianlong Ecological Farming, for instance, has developed a 5G-connected smart operational system for its animal farms.

"Among many of our operations, we have two smart chicken farms," an executive of the company said. "The 200,000-plus chickens in the farms are now taken care of by only two workers thanks to the higher level of automation and digitalization."

Yangquan has implemented 32 agricultural modernization projects with a combined investment of 2.73 billion yuan (\$387.54 million) in its rural areas since the beginning of the year, an official at the city's bureau of agriculture and rural affairs said. He added that many of the projects are related to smart and environmentally friendly farming.

*Bai Xuefeng and Su Xiaochen contributed to this story.*

## Province showcases entrepreneurs and inventors at a nationwide level

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

The boom in innovation in Shanxi can create momentum for local economic development and an increase in entrepreneurship is a signal of confidence in local markets, participants said during a promotional event.

The event, held from Sept 15-21 in the city of Taiyuan, was part of the National Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation Week. It included exhibitions, forums, contests, promotions and on-site training.

According to the organizers, 100 successful innovation and entrepreneurship examples were displayed.

One standout was local tech company Shanxi Yichuneng Technologies, which presented its cutting-edge fluorine-ion membrane.

An executive of the company said the innovative product is the core material for vanadium redox batteries. They are now mainly used for the storage of solar energy.

"With the properties of high tensile strength, high resistance to erosion and high conductivity, the fluorine-ion membrane is a crucial component for improving a battery's storage capacity and prolonging its life cycle," the executive said. He added that the membrane can be used in other types of batteries and for hydrogen production involving water electrolysis technique.

He said the company now owns two fully automatic production lines, with an annual output of more than 40,000 square meters of products.



The Shanxi subevent of the National Mass Entrepreneurship and Innovation Week is held in Taiyuan from Sept 15 to 21.

LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Another highlight of the event was a smart logistics solution developed by Shanxi Kuaicheng Logistics Technologies.

Wang Teng, a manager of the company, said the solution is empowered by such new-generation information technologies as 5G internet, big data, the internet of things and blockchain.

"Logistics companies can access the solution through a smartphone app, which helps them identify suppliers and make settlements online," Wang said. In addition, he said the transporting vehicle's image and travel trajectories can be tracked online, so couriers can better manage their operations.

The Shanxi-based company now has its services available in 18 provin-

ces and regions in China. Its online transaction volume ranks in the top three nationwide, according to Wang.

In addition to exhibitions and displays, a contest for innovation and entrepreneurship aroused great enthusiasm among candidates and attracted the attention of businesses who were seeking new technologies, solutions and partners.

Shanxi has hosted seven sessions of the innovation and entrepreneurship proposal contest. A great number of proposals put forward by the candidates have been put into production, according to the event's organizers.

*Zhang Yi and Li Shu contributed to this story.*

## Overseas Chinese taste produce by white liquor maker Xinghuacun Fenjiu

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Guests from Australia were treated to a liquor tasting event hosted by renowned white liquor producer Xinghuacun Fenjiu on Aug 18 in Beijing, serving as a prelude to the launch of new varieties into the Australian market.

Those attending the gala included Australian business representatives and diplomats in Beijing, overseas Chinese as well as Chinese guests who have been engaged in exchanges with Australia.

Huang Rengang, former minister counselor for commercial affairs at the Chinese embassy in Australia, said this year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations

between China and Australia and the two countries have seen steady development in business ties over the past few decades.

He added that he expects the white liquor brand owned by the Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group based in the city of Fenyang, Shanxi province, can play a role in strengthening economic exchanges between the two nations.

An executive in charge of international operations at Xinghuacun Fenjiu introduced at the event the recent developments of the brand in the Australian market and talked about its history. The brand name of Xinghuacun Fenjiu has a profound association with the long domestic history of alcoholic beverage production.



Xinghuacun Fenjiu presents its latest varieties to Australian guests during a tasting event in Beijing. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

For many centuries, *fenjiu* had referred to the alcoholic beverage varieties produced in the city of Fenyang. Xinghuacun, which liter-

ally means apricot blossom village, is the township where Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group is located and has been the hub of alcoholic bev-

erage production in Fenyang.

In July 1982, archaeologists began excavations of ancient ruins in Xinghuacun township, including the premises of the company.

Discoveries in the decades prove that the region's production of alcoholic beverages can be traced back to some 6,000 years ago.

In the past century an ancient bottle containing traces of the alcoholic beverage was discovered in the region. It is 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 white liquor companies of China that have gone global. After it won a gold prize at the Panama 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 in Southeast Asia and East Asia and then to Europe and the Americas. To date, Xinghuacun Fenjiu has developed a presence in more than 200 cities in 80-plus countries.

*Zhao Qingyuan contributed to this story.*