



Provincial and local officials witness the groundbreaking of the Xiongan-Xinzhou High-Speed Railway on Oct 1. SHI XIAOBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi's growth potential to shoot up with bullet trains

High-speed railway plans and new expressways connect province with cities across the nation



By YUAN SHENGGAO

With construction beginning on a new high-speed railway, Shanxi province is to have another channel of rapid link to its neighboring provinces and municipalities.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Xiongan-Xinzhou High-Speed Railway was held in the township of Shizui in the central Shanxi city of Xinzhou on Oct 1. Shizui is close to the renowned Wutai Mountain Scenic Area.

Secretary of the Shanxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China Lin Wu, Shanxi Governor Lan Fo'an and other provincial and local officials were at the ceremony.

The new railway line will play an important role in connecting two important regional development programs in North China, said local officials.

Xiongan refers to Xiongan New Area in Hebei province. China announced plans to establish Xiongan New Area on April 1, 2017, to relieve Beijing of functions not essential to its role as capital.

The new area also marks a crucial step in advancing the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

The city of Xinzhou is an important part of the Taiyuan-Xinzhou integration program, a recent move to build a city cluster and development hub in the center of Shanxi.

The urban integration program of the two cities was launched in 2021 by the Shanxi provincial government, according to the central government's requirements.

In March 2021, the State Council released a guideline for the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). It requires Shanxi to foster a city cluster in its central region. The cluster is to host industries moving from Beijing and Tianjin municipalities as well as Hebei province, where an integrated regional development plan is in place.

Grasping this opportunity, the Shanxi provincial government proposed the development of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone in the months that followed.

The zone officially opened on Dec 29, marked by the establishment of the Promotional Center for the Development of Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone.

The plan for the high-speed railway's construction was proposed before the Taiyuan-Xinzhou integration program.

Early in 2020, the National Development and Reform Commission approved the construction of the Xiongan-Xinzhou High-Speed Railway.

According to officials at the groundbreaking ceremony, the new line — with a total investment of 59.1 billion yuan (\$8.22 billion) and a total length of 342 kilometers — will be the first in Shanxi to allow trains to travel at speeds of up to 350 kilometers per hour.

Starting from a tunnel near Shizui township, the Shanxi section of the railway will measure 122 km in length. Expenditure on the Shanxi section is to be 20.9 billion yuan.

The railway line will have 13 stations, with four in Shanxi. The Wutai Mountain Scenic Area is to be the first station in the province.

Officials said the project is scheduled to be completed in about four and a half years. Once the railway is completed, it will help spread the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region's innovative resources, skilled workers, emerging manufacturing industries and modern service industry to the Taiyuan-Xinzhou Integrated Economic Zone.

According to an official at the Shanxi Provincial Department of Transport, the Xiongan-Xinzhou High-Speed Railway will mark a milestone transport infrastructure project in Shanxi for the decade to

come.

He said Shanxi currently has 6,274 km of railways, including 1,150 km of high-speed railways. The high-speed lines link all the nine major cities of Shanxi, as well as a great number of smaller cities and counties.

According to the official, about 2,000 km of expressways have been built in Shanxi province since 2012, bringing the total length to 5,763 km.

There is also substantial growth in ordinary highways to link the cities and the countryside in Shanxi.

With a boom in the construction of rural roads, 100 percent of villages in the province now have access to paved roads and couriers' express delivery services, according to the official.

He added that three major sightseeing highways have been built in Shanxi for the three landmark tourist attractions of the Yellow River, the Great Wall and the Taihang Mountains. Connecting nearly 400 destinations, the three highways have played an important role in boosting the local tourism industry.

Seven cities in Shanxi have airports for civil aviation services. The cities are connected to 82 cities in the rest of the country and the world through 278 air routes.

Zhang Jufeng and Zheng Na contributed to this story.

River improvements give region new lease of life

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The Fenhe River, the second-largest river in Shanxi province, is now once again the pride of residents as it continues to nurture local lives and bring more environmental benefits.

Stretching 713 kilometers and with a drainage area of 39,721 square kilometers, the Fenhe is the second-largest tributary of the Yellow River, which is the second-longest river in the country and considered China's "mother river".

In turn, the Fenhe is the "mother river" of Shanxi, nurturing the region with thousands of years of history in farming.

However, because of overuse of water, a decrease in vegetation coverage and industrial pollution, the river lost its historical glamor several decades ago.

Wang Xiaoyan, a resident of Taiyuan, said she still remembers her early impressions of the river.

She recalled that about two decades ago, living near the river was unpleasant.

"No one liked to walk along the river," Wang said. "The Fenhe was a dry river for the majority of the year. And it had an unpleasant smell for the rest of it."

Changes began to take place in the late 1990s, when cities like Taiyuan launched environmental improve-

ment projects for the river, with local authorities focusing their efforts on pollution control and increasing water supply to the river.

Shanxi began to improve the entire river in 2017. It focused on increasing water supply and improving its ecological environment.

A water diversion project starting from the Wanjiashai Dam, on the upper reaches of the Yellow River, began to supply water to the Fenhe that year, with water lifted by several pumping stations and diverted to the Fenhe River at its source in Ningwu county.

According to Tian Xiaojun, an engineer in charge of the first pumping station in Wanjiashai, the water diversion project has supplied about 118 million cubic meters of water to Fenhe during the first seven months of this year.

"In addition to the Fenhe, the Sanggan River in Datong, which is upstream of the Yongding River in Beijing, is also a recipient of the Yellow River water through the Wanjiashai project," Tian said.

Feng Zhijun, chairman and Party chief of Wanjiashai Water Group, said the Wanjiashai project was initially designed to supply water to Shanxi's major cities for industrial and household use.

He said Wanjiashai has supplied 2.8 billion cu m of water to Taiyuan



The scenic belt along the Jinyang Bridge section of the Fenhe River is a new tourist attraction in Taiyuan. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

alone over the two decades since the project became operational in 2002.

"The Yellow River water has not only increased the runoff of the Fenhe, but also helped to improve the river's water quality," Feng said.

A monitoring station at the Fenhe's estuary shows steady improvement in the water quality of the river 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.

As a result of efforts to increase water supply and improve the environment, the Fenhe has once again become a scenic river with a pleasant environment.

Chen Xiaoli, another Taiyuan resident, said she enjoys walking along the river in the evening, especially 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 of Taiyuan since its construction in 2019.

"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 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 popular 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.

Cheng Guoyuan, Fan Zhen and Ding Yuan contributed to this story.

Achievements on show

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Tens of thousands of visitors were attracted to a Shanxi exhibition in Beijing recently to see what achievements the North China province has made over the past decade.

The Shanxi exhibition is a part of a national show called *Forging Ahead in the New Era*, opening on Sept 27 at the Beijing Exhibition Hall. It displays the new achievements and breakthroughs the country has made over the past 10 years. Covering more than 30,000 square meters in total, it features more than 6,000 exhibits.

At the Shanxi pavilion, the province is highlighting its accomplishments in economic transformation, energy revolution, low-carbon growth, environmental protection, balanced urban and rural development, as well as improvements in people's livelihoods.

The transformation of Shanxi is demonstrated with pictures, videos, material objects and models.

The energy sector is a highlight of Shanxi's exhibition. While ensuring coal and electricity supplies to stabilize the national economy, Shanxi's energy industry is at the forefront of the province's economic transformation. This involves upgrading traditional industries and fostering emerging sectors as new growth engines.

The province is now running an energy revolution campaign that targets sustainable development. While highlighting the development of clean energy resources — including wind power, solar power and hydrogen fuels — Shanxi is using the latest technologies to upgrade its coal-mining and coal-fired power generation industries toward clean and safe production, higher efficiency and lower emissions.

At the energy industry area of the Shanxi pavilion, videos show visitors how the latest digital technologies and solutions are used, like 5G-connected mining shafts, unmanned coal cutting and fully automated coke production.

Another section that attracts visitors' attention is Shanxi's cultural tourism resources. The exhibits include videos and pictures of the latest archaeological discoveries and the process of making handicrafts, as well as folk art performances. There are also virtual displays of Shanxi's heritage sites like Pingyao and the Yungang Grottoes.

At the Shanxi pavilion, the visitor experience is enhanced with the services of six professional guides. The guides, with versatile knowledge in industries, science, technology, culture and history, have played a crucial role in helping visitors tap into the development of various sectors across the province.

Li Lian contributed to this story.

A guide introduces Shanxi's new achievements to visitors at the *Forging Ahead in the New Era* show. LI LIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tasting event showcases unique flavors of Fenjiu

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group, a renowned white liquor producer based in the Shanxi city of Fenyang, hosted a tasting event in the city of Vancouver in Canada, treating local customers to its latest varieties called Silk Road limited edition.

To attract the attention of young consumers, Xinghuacun Fenjiu invited a number of local internet influencers to broadcast the event online.

Industry insiders and representatives of clients were also invited to the site to taste the new white liquor varieties before their launch in the local market.

Guests at the event were also treated to cocktails mixing Fenjiu liquor with local ingredients.

Executives from Xinghuacun Fenjiu Group introduced the history of the liquor brand to guests, saying that it has a history of about 100 years in Vancouver and the rest of Canada.

According to historical documents, Fenjiu was exported to Canada through the dealer Tianjin Wing Lee Wai in the 1920s.

The dealer in the North China coastal city of Tianjin was a branch of trade company Wing Lee Wai in Hong Kong.

According to Xinghuacun Fenjiu executives, the distiller first set

foot in Hong Kong at the beginning of the 20th century. From Hong Kong, the Fenjiu-branded white liquor products were sold to Japan, Southeast Asia and other regions.

Using Hong Kong as an entry point, Wing Lee Wai has been the most important dealer of Fenjiu-branded products in overseas markets for more than 100 years.

Fenjiu began to attract the attention of international buyers in 1915 after it won a first prize at the Panama Pacific International Expo, which was held in San Francisco in the United States. Seeing its market potential, Wing Lee Wai signed a franchise agreement with Jinyu Fenjiu, the predecessor of Xinghuacun Fenjiu, in 1919, to be responsible for the brand's sales in Hong Kong, Macao and overseas markets.

Wing Lee Wai began to ship Fenjiu liquor to Hawaii and San Francisco in the US and Vancouver in Canada in 1923.

To date, white liquor products made by Xinghuacun Fenjiu have been sold to foreign markets through its 50-plus dealers. They are available in more than 9,000 outlets, including 180-plus duty-free shops, overseas, according to the company's executives.

Zhao Qingyuan contributed to this story.



Xinghuacun Fenjiu representatives introduce a new white liquor variety to guest in Vancouver. WEN ZHAOYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY