

Delegation to submit ideas at key meeting

Deputies from across Shanxi attending National People's Congress in Beijing to deliver proposals and hear Government Work Report



By YUAN SHENGGAO

At the first session of the 14th National People's Congress, held in Beijing from March 5 to 13, NPC deputies from North China's Shanxi province are putting forward motions and proposals on issues relating to legislation and national and local socioeconomic development.

The Shanxi delegation to the annual NPC session is planning to put forward joint proposals across multiple areas.

According to a report of the Shanxi Daily newspaper, the proposals include making the Taiyuan Energy Low Carbon Development Forum a regular international event; building a new high-speed railway linking Shanxi and Shandong provinces; enhancing Shanxi's role in the experimental zone for the ecological protection and the high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin; giving stronger financial support for upgrading coal mines toward more intelligent and safer operations; and developing the city cluster in central Shanxi into a national demonstration zone for the

commercialization of scientific and technological achievements.

Zhang Shili, an NPC delegate from Shanxi, highlighted the importance of upgrading coal mines in Shanxi, as the province plays a crucial role in national energy security.

"The smart operation of coal mines is a vital link in Shanxi's energy revolution campaign," Zhang said. "The use of digital and automatic technologies and solutions can ensure efficiency and safety, bringing both social and economic benefits."

Zhang, who is also a foreman at a coal mine affiliated to Lu'an Group based in the southeastern Shanxi city of Changzhi, suggested preferential taxation and financial policies be used to encourage the construction of safer, more efficient and more environmentally friendly coal mines.

"While the larger-sized mines have their own capability to upgrade operations, more financial support should be given to smaller-sized coal mines, which account for a large proportion in the industry and are relatively weak in technological and financial resources, when they are launching projects for digitalization and automation," Zhang said.

He added that the entire coal-mining industry should strengthen collaborations with research institutions and universities across the country and form industrial alliances for the promotion of digital, automatic and environmentally

friendly operational solutions.

Including Zhang, there are a number of NPC deputies from Shanxi representing grassroots workers.

Based on their experiences, these deputies said improving the skills of workers to meet the demand of modern operations is crucial for both their career development and local economic growth.

Deputy Fan Yinlian is a technician at Gaotao Ceramics based in the city of Xinzhou. She said the governments should enhance investment in vocational training.

"Fostering competent, highly skilled workers is crucial for China to become a powerhouse of modern manufacturing," Fan said.

The NPC deputies from rural Shanxi have also proposed suggestions on rural vitalization.

Deputy Guo Fenglian, who led the development of Dazhai village in Shanxi's Xiyang county in the 1960s and 1970s, is proposing new solutions for rural development.

Dazhai used to be household name and a role model for rural development in China back then. Now Guo is suggesting that developing multiple industries could be a viable way to boost the rural economy.

In Dazhai, the integration of tourism and farming industries has become a new revenue stream for local residents. Guo said that the village, now boasting 130-plus catering and lodging businesses, has received



Clockwise from top: National People's Congress deputies from Shanxi leave the Great Hall of the People after a day's meeting. Shanxi NPC deputies discuss their proposals to be presented to the congress. Shanxi deputies share their opinions on the Government Work Report on March 5.

PHOTOS BY LI LIANJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

more than 200,000 visits annually in recent years. The annual tourism revenue was about 10 million yuan (\$1.43 million), meaning an additional income of 10,000 yuan to each resident on average.

Appraising the government's work of 2022 and assessing its plan for this year are another mission of the deputies at the NPC session.

After hearing and studying the

Government Work Report delivered on March 5, deputies from Shanxi said they are satisfied with the Chinese government's achievements in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, stabilizing the economy, safeguarding people's welfare and promoting reforms in the past year. They added that they are optimistic about development for this year and beyond.

Deputy Chu Xianghao, mayor of

the city of Yuncheng, said the report is both encouraging and inspiring and the plans it proposed for this year are practical.

"We will study it further and map out our local implementation measures for the plans when we are back in Yuncheng," Chu said.

Yang Wen and Yang Wenjun contributed to this story.

District highlighted for metalmaking expertise

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Malleable cast iron, which is said to be equal to or even better than carbon steel in terms of strength, ductility and tenacity, is not a popular metal among the general public, despite its wide applications in making construction piping systems, valves and components for machines.

But Taigu, a district in the Shanxi city of Jinzhong, has garnered a reputation for this product.

In September, the government of Shanxi released its first batch of 10 provincial-level characteristic towns and Taigu was on the list.

Developing towns with characteristic industries is a new strategy in Shanxi, which aims to create new engines for high-quality growth.

Taigu has a history of nearly five decades in producing malleable cast iron. Industry insiders recalled that from the 1970s to the 1990s, the industry was dominated by a number of small mills but it began to drastically expand in the 1990s.

Kanaifu Group, now a manufacturer with assets totaling 450 million yuan (\$64.6 million), is an example of and a witness to the industry's growth.

Yang Haiping, a casting worker, said he began to work with the company when he was only 18.

"We began from a small mill with only one pipe-threading machine in 1995," Yang said. "Now we have a full

portfolio of automatic facilities for casting, machining and producing finished piping components."

The veteran worker said he now works eight hours a day, earning a monthly salary of 8,000 yuan. He added that he is happy to see the industry has created jobs for thousands of residents like him.

Local statistics show that Taigu is now home to 112 companies in the industry, producing about 1 million metric tons of products and generating a combined sales revenue of 7 billion yuan a year.

Manufacturers there produce more than 1,000 product varieties, with sales reaching more than 40 countries and regions across the world.

In addition, the full industrial chain in Taigu has offered jobs to nearly 100,000 people.

In recent years, Taigu's malleable cast iron industry has gained competitiveness through technological upgrades.

Longcheng Malleable Iron, for instance, has an upgrade project underway, installing digitalized and automatic production lines for smart production.

"The current upgrade is expected to substantially improve our operational efficiency," said Han Jia, general manager of the company. "The casting efficiency, for example, can be increased by 50 percent compared with our current production facility."



From top: Malleable cast-iron products are displayed at a showroom in Taigu. Casting dies for malleable iron components are produced at a plant in the district. PHOTOS BY SUN TAIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

He added that the new production facilities will be more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. "The electrical furnace is set to save 15 percent of electricity and considerably cut emissions," Han said.

Liu Wei, Party secretary of the district, said the listing of Taigu as a provincial-level characteristic town will improve the competitiveness of the industry.

He said the initiative will help to increase the influence of Taigu's malleable cast iron products in both domestic and international markets.

Liu expects that the industry can develop into a cluster with an annual sales revenue surpassing 10 billion yuan by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25).

Pei Yunfeng contributed to this story.

Sustainable growth achieved in province

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi's GDP reached 2.56 trillion yuan (\$359 billion) in 2022, surpassing the 2.50 trillion yuan benchmark for the first time, according to data released by the Shanxi Bureau of Statistics last month.

Over the past five years, the figure has increased from 1.45 trillion yuan in 2017 to 2 trillion yuan in 2021 and 2.56 trillion yuan in 2022, with an average annual increase of about 6 percent. Its nationwide ranking grew from 21st in 2021 to 20th last year, showing its improving economic strength.

Local officials said the steady and sustainable growth is a result of Shanxi's economic transformation, a campaign aimed at upgrading its traditional industries and fostering emerging sectors as new growth engines.

Through the use of digital and intelligent technologies, Shanxi has made great achievements in upgrading its traditional coal-mining industry.

According to the Shanxi Energy Bureau, about 80 percent of Shanxi's coal output was produced by advanced facilities featuring cleaner, safer and more efficient operations in 2022. The total coal output reached 1.3 billion metric tons last year, ranking first in the country.

As about 620 million tons of local coal was transported to power generation enterprises in the rest of the country last year, Shanxi's coal-mining industry played a crucial role in ensuring national energy security.

In addition, Shanxi's power generation enterprises produced 415.33 billion kilowatt-hours of

electricity last year, growing 7.5 percent year-on-year. More than 146 billion kWh of electricity was transmitted to the rest of the country, increasing 18.5 percent from 2021.

The province has also seen substantial growth in its clean energy resources development.

Shanxi's natural gas output reached 11.33 billion cubic meters last year, growing 20.2 percent year-on-year. The capacity of power generated from clean energy resources including wind and solar energy reached 49 million kilowatts, accounting for 40.25 percent of Shanxi's total.

While traditional energy industries have been upgraded and enhanced, the province's emerging industries are offering new momentum for growth.

The new energy vehicle industry is one of 14 strategic emerging sectors in Shanxi.

Geely Automobile's NEV facility in Jinzhong, Shanxi reported an output value of 20 billion yuan for 2022, marking its leading role in the sector.

Last year, total NEV output in Shanxi increased 62.2 percent year-on-year, while the combined sales revenue rose 85.7 percent.

The fledgling digital economy, which is playing a crucial role in local industrial digitalization, also reached a scale of 500 billion yuan last year, according to local statistics.

Shanxi's authorities predicted the province's transformation from a resource-reliant economy to an economy of diversification will be completed by 2030.

Leng Xue contributed to this story.



Artists perform a dragon dance to entertain visitors in the old city of Taiyuan in Shanxi. Cultural tourism is an emerging growth area in the province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Members call for support for industrial transformation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As Shanxi promotes an industrial transformation for high-quality development, the province's members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference are calling for stronger State support in this area.

They made the remarks when attending the annual sessions of the CPPCC National Committee and the National People's Congress, which are being held in Beijing from March 4-13.

Shanxi is implementing an industrial transformation campaign that highlights upgrading its energy industry and fostering emerging industries as new engines to drive local growth.

Sun Yuhuan, a CPPCC National Committee member and president of the Shanxi Institute of Huairou Laboratory, said the Government Work Report delivered on March 5 at the annual NPC session mentioned that research on the clean and efficient use of coal

should be promoted and that is exactly what his institute is pursuing.

He said the institute was founded in February 2022 as a collaborative project between the Shanxi provincial government and Huairou Laboratory, a Beijing-based State-level research platform in the field of energy.

"The establishment of the institute aims at offering technological support for Shanxi's energy revolution campaign, especially in the area of the clean and efficient use of coal," Sun said.

As the clean and efficient use of coal is crucial for the nation's low-carbon development targets, he hopes related ministries and commissions can give stronger financial and policy support for key fundamental energy research programs in Shanxi.

He Han, a CPPCC National Committee member and the chairman of Shanxi Data Traffic Ecology Park, offered his proposal on how to promote industrial digitalization.

He said China has achieved rapid growth in the digital economy in

recent years but noted there is still unbalanced development in various regions across the country.

"We see the digital gap has been narrowed thanks to the nation's new move to channel data and computing resources from the east to the west, which features the establishment of big data facilities in western regions," He said. "The big data industry is beginning to show its spillover effect for fostering an extended industrial chain."

He said Shanxi is an active player in digital industrialization with digital technologies used in a variety of industries including coal mining, coking, steelmaking and power generation.

He said he hopes the central government can propose guidelines for the digital industry's development in China's central and western regions.

In another development, Shanxi's CPPCC National Committee members put forward a joint proposal calling for a specific law governing geographical indications.

A GI is a sign used on goods that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation due to that place of origin. The GI used on products shows that they have a specific quality exclusively or essentially due to the geographical environment in which the products are produced.

The proposal said that GI protection is currently governed by the intellectual property protection laws and regulations, especially those related to trademark protection. However, the proposal said there should also be an independent legislative framework for GI because it has distinctive features other than IP.

As most of the GIs are granted to farming and related products, the proposal said the legislation for GI is crucial for rural vitalization and development.

Shanxi now has 27 GIs and 108 trademarks with GI.

Deng Weiqiang contributed to this story.