



Hydrogen-fueled vehicles are assembled at the production plant of Meijin Group in Taiyuan. HOU LIJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Conference highlights vital role of private enterprises

Event sees businesses awarded for contributions to development of Shanxi province



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Contributions made by private enterprises to Taiyuan's development were praised by local authorities during a recent conference in the capital city of Shanxi province.

Nearly 1,000 representatives of companies, trade associations and household businesses attended the Taiyuan High-Quality Development Conference for the Private Economy held on June 30.

Nineteen enterprises were awarded as private businesses with outstanding contributions at the event. There were also awards for 160 excellent private businesses, 44 excellent entrepreneurs, 30 excellent household businesses and 10 excellent trade associations.

"This is the largest-scale event focusing on the private economy I have ever attended," said Chen Deping, general manager of Shanxi iFlytek Artificial Intelligence Technology.

The company was among the 160 excellent private companies recognized by the authorities of Taiyuan.

"We are glad to win the award," Chen said. "But we are even happier with the fact that a slew of new preferential policies were released by the Shanxi Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Shanxi provincial government, which will boost our confidence in future growth."

Authorities of Taiyuan announced a package of 26 incentive policies in eight categories that include further optimizing administrative services and protecting the interests of private businesses. This is the latest addition to the existing preferential policies issued by the central, provincial and city governments.

Taiyuan's private businesses saw their revival in the late 1970s when China's reform and opening-up ini-

tiatives began and have developed in a rapid and sustainable manner over the past decades.

Meijin Group based in Taiyuan, for instance, is a private company that has grown along with China's development over the decades.

The company was founded in 1981, with an initial investment of just 16,000 yuan (\$2,232) borrowed from a local bank, according to Yao Junliang, board chairman of Meijin.

After it had grown into a major coal mining and coking enterprise in Taiyuan, Yao said it began to diversify into the hydrogen industry in 2017. In about six years, Meijin has developed into one of the major hydrogen producers and hydrogen energy solutions providers in Shanxi province.

Its product and service portfolio in the hydrogen industry now includes hydrogen, hydrogen-fueled vehicles, hydrogen storage and hydrogen filling stations.

Meijin's production plant for hydrogen-fueled vehicles began construction in September 2022. With a total investment of 1.8 billion yuan, the facility is capable of an annual output of 20,000 vehicles with a loading capacity of up to 49 metric tons.

The first phase of the plant is now operational, which can produce 5,000 hydrogen trucks a year and core components to match this capacity, according to Yao.

"The beneficial business environment in Taiyuan, as well as Shanxi province, which includes the authorities' emphasis on the private economy, the preferential policies and the governments' constant efforts to improve services for businesses, is one of the major driving forces for Meijin's growth," the executive said.

A winner of the excellent private business award, Jinbo Biology is another prime example of the successful development of private businesses in Taiyuan — not only in conventional industries but also in cutting-edge sectors.

Jinbo is the developer of recom-

binant human-origin collagen III. It is a product at a globally advanced level, which can be used in different sectors ranging from surgery, gynecology and dermatology to skin care cosmetics, according to Yang Xia, founder and chairwoman of the company.

The executive said Jinbo Biology is one of the few enterprises in the world that mass produces the collagen. Its volume production began in January 2021.

When recalling Jinbo's growth over the years, Yang said she is grateful for the professional, considerate and highly efficient services provided by the local authorities.

She cited the government's supportive measures like assistance in fundraising, promoting collaborations between enterprises and research institutions, protecting intellectual property rights, and helping enterprises recruit research and development professionals.

Yang said the recent support from local authorities entailed the financial office of the Taiyuan city government helping the company in advancing procedures to go public on the domestic stock market. Its registration for initial public offering was approved by the China Securities Regulatory Commission on June 26.

Wang Guodong, an official in charge of industry and information technology at the Taiyuan committee of the Communist Party of China, made a detailed interpretation of the new preferential policies announced at the event.

He said the policies were mapped out as a result of the local officials' extensive and intensive research tours of local businesses. The focus of the tours was to identify the difficulties and challenges the private businesses faced, and to listen to their pressing concerns and demands relating to their development.

He especially noted that Wei Tao, secretary of the Taiyuan CPC committee, visited a great number of enterprises for the drafting of the preferential policies.

"One problem we noticed during the research tours was the complaint of delayed payment from institutional buyers," Wang said.

He explained that the governmental institutions are allocating more expenditure on buying products and services from private businesses to show their support. "Delay of payment could happen sometimes because of the complicated settlement procedures of institutions," Wang said.

To address this concern, the government has made it a rule that government procurement should be part of the administrative transparency initiative, allowing the procedures of transaction, implementation and payment to be supervised by the businesses and the public.

Other incentives for private companies are special funds to be established to spur their development. These include funds for industrial transformation, industrial digitalization and technological innovation.

Wang said it is noteworthy that there are specific funds for cultivating high-quality small and medium-sized enterprises, where private businesses are the mainstay.

For instance, Wang said SMEs that fall in the specialized, refined, differential and innovative categories or are defined as "little giants" — small enterprises that are still in the early stage of development and focus on new-generation information technology, high-end equipment manufacturing, new energy, new materials, biomedicine and other high-tech fields — can be awarded up to 3.3 million yuan annually according to their performance.

Thanks to Taiyuan's beneficial business environment, the city has witnessed a growing enthusiasm for entrepreneurship in the private sector in recent years.

Local statistics show that the number of private business entities in Taiyuan surpassed 763,000 in 2022, accounting for 99.1 percent of the city's total. These entities have created employment for 1.62 million people, representing 62.4 percent of Taiyuan's work population.

Yang Yu contributed to this story.

# Ancient puppet arts kept alive at city's museum

By YUAN SHENGGAO

At the heart of a bustling business district in the Shanxi city of Xiaoyi is an ancient courtyard surrounded by modern office, shopping and residential buildings. This is China's first museum for shadow puppetry and other forms of puppet arts.

The museum, built in the 1980s and covering a land area of about 10,000 square meters, exhibits shadow puppet figures, marionettes, scripts and other accessories collected from Xiaoyi and across the rest of the country. There are also photos and videos of shadow play shows and a history of the arts.

Shadow puppetry, also called shadow play, is one of the historical folk arts in China. It is a form of storytelling that uses puppet figures against an illuminated backdrop to create the illusion of moving images.

However, the art, which used to be a main form of entertainment in rural China, is in a process of decline. Nowadays, there are more options for entertainment. The art faces the risk of extinction in many parts of the country, with shadow play troupes disbanded, talented artists growing old or even dying and many scripts becoming lost.

Fortunately, the art is relatively well preserved in Xiaoyi and is still a part of local life, according to Zhu Wen, dean of the museum.

He added that Xiaoyi's shadow puppetry has its origins in the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). It became mature in the Song Dynasty (960-1279) and reached its peak in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

"Xiaoyi's shadow puppetry has many distinct features compared with those in the rest of the country," Zhu said.

"Puppeteers in Xiaoyi are able to change the facial expressions

of puppet figures and carry out complicated movements, such as dancing with long sleeves flapping, practicing calligraphy and even spitting fire."

The dean said one of the missions of the museum is to raise enthusiasm among the public for the art and help to pass it down to future generations.

For these purposes, the museum has strengthened cooperation with local artists, staged shows and organized events to train youngsters.

During the recent May Day holiday, for instance, renowned puppet maker Hu Fawei opened a workshop at the museum, displaying his skills on-site. Next to his workshop were shows staged by master puppeteer Guo Erbao.

In addition to the museum, there are many artists and organizations engaged in the protection and inheritance of the art in Xiaoyi.

Renowned puppet artist Hou Jianchuan, for instance, has established a studio for the disabled, helping them to master the skill.

He has led his special troupe to perform in Xiaoyi and throughout the rest of Shanxi, helping the members earn a livelihood.

"The best way to preserve a traditional art is to make it a source of income for people, especially for the underprivileged," Hou said.

Xiaoyi Puppetry Troupe, the leading troupe in the city, has an even greater ambition to bring the art to the world.

It recently staged a show at an evening gala for the 14th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, or the Summer Davos Forum, held in Tianjin in late June. It won praise from the forum's participants, according to Liu Yaxing, head of the troupe.

Chen Lihong contributed to this story.



From top: Manipulating puppets to spit fire is one of the unique skills that help Xiaoyi's art form stand out from others in the rest of the country. Students learn to make puppet figures at a studio in Xiaoyi. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Modern machines help to dispel harvest doubts

By YUAN SHENGGAO

For wheat farmers in Shanxi province, the period from late May to late June is the busiest time and one of anxiety as uncertainties can happen even when a good harvest looks set.

This is especially true this year, which has featured a string of setbacks. These included a drastic temperature drop during winter sowing, frequent cold fronts in spring and higher-than-usual rainfall during the grain filling stage in May.

But the biggest challenge lies in harvesting, according to local farmers and agricultural officials.

"During this critical period for harvesting, weather and efficiency are crucial," said an official at the Shanxi Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.



Wheat grain is loaded onto a truck near a farm in Shanxi after being reaped by combine harvesters. LI XIANGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

The province became rainy in late May, a time when wheat turns mature and is ready for harvest.

Due to the weather, great efficiency is needed during harvesting to prevent the grains from going

moldy or germinating, according to the official.

Despite the adverse weather, the official said wheat output in Shanxi is expected to have a slight increase compared with 2022. While the department is still calculating on the total output based on data sent from different regions in Shanxi, it has received reports of high per-unit yields.

A farm in Dongguan village in Yicheng county, for instance, reported a per-hectare output of 12,390 kilograms, a record for wheat farming in Shanxi.

The official said that farming modernization, especially the extensive use of farming machines, has played a crucial role in improving efficiency and stabilizing output.

According to statistics collected by the department, Shanxi has

mobilized more than 351,000 machines for summer farming. Harvesting machines, including combine harvesters, were used to reap more than 540,900 hectares of wheat in Shanxi, with a mechanized harvesting ratio reaching 99.4 percent.

In the summer corn-sowing season that followed, machines were used on about 344,600 hectares of farms, which make up 99.9 percent of the province's total corn-planting area.

In Shanxi, farming activities are becoming more modernized thanks to the use of various machines and smart technologies, which has helped to improve efficiency substantially.

However, the efforts of farmers are by no means reduced with the help of machines, which call for complicated skills to operate them, according to Ci Haijun, a farming machine operator in Dongdaqiu village, Jiexiu county. "Fortunately, agricultural offi-

cialists in Shanxi are fully aware of this situation," Ci said. "They are addressing the problem by offering training to farmers, helping us master skills relating to operation and maintenance."

Ci was the champion of a recent contest for operating harvesting machines. The event was held at various harvesting sites, with experts assessing the efficiency of machine operators.

"I won the first place for a grain loss rate of 0.109 percent during harvesting. This is the lowest among all contestants province-wide," Ci said. The average rate was 0.78 percent among contenders.

Organizers said the contest is part of a provincial campaign to improve machine-operating skills. The winners will be hired as trainers for other farmers so best practices can be promoted.

Wang Xujuan and Guo Huicong contributed to this story.