

From left: The 16th Shanxi Provincial Games opens in Datong on Tuesday evening. Renowned Shanxi athlete Su Yiming lights the flame of the main torch of the provincial games at its opening. PHOTOS BY RUAN YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Athletes throughout province compete for glory in games

Gala highlights Shanxi's sporting achievements and boosts enthusiasm for fitness activities

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The 16th Shanxi Provincial Games, now taking place in the northern Shanxi city of Datong, is seen by local officials as a gala to showcase the province's recent achievements in athletics, a promoter of mass sports and a booster for the sports economy.

The launch of the event was announced by Lan Fo'an, secretary of the Shanxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, at the opening ceremony on Tuesday evening.

Jin Xiangjun, governor of Shanxi, also delivered a keynote speech at the ceremony. He said that the sports sector plays a role in improving people's physical and spiritual well-being, as well as promoting economic growth. It is now an important part of Shanxi's high-quality socio-economic development.

"The prosperity of the sports sector in Shanxi is evidenced by the sustained improvement of sports facilities, the popularity of mass sports, the steady progress in athletics and the dynamic growth of the sports industry," Jin said.

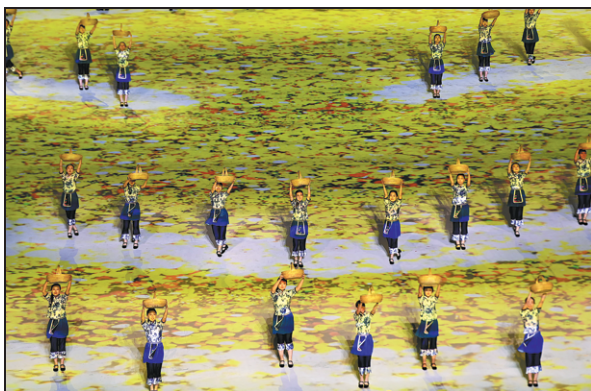
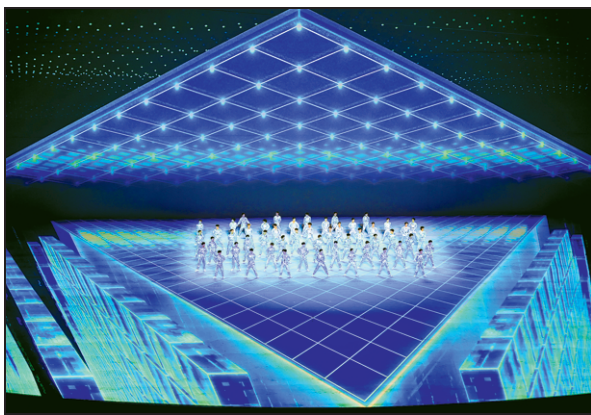
He went on to say that the provincial games are also the highest-level and the largest-scale sports gala that displays the morale of Shanxi's athletes and residents who are in constant pursuit of something better and stronger.

He expressed his hope that the organizers, the staff members and the volunteers will work together to present an economical, safe and brilliant sports event.

Jin's keynote speech was followed by the oath-taking ceremony by representatives of athletes, coaches and referees, who pledged to ensure fair play during the event.

Then came a show with performances by local artists, augmented by multimedia and modern lighting and acoustic technologies.

The opening ceremony was wrapped up with a torch relay and flame lighting.



Performances are staged at the opening ceremony of the 16th Shanxi Provincial Games.

After receiving the torch from the last of five bearers, renowned Shanxi athlete Su Yiming lit the flame of the main torch at Datong Sports Center, the main venue of the event.

According to an organizing official of the event, the 16th provincial games consist of two categories of athletic sports and mass sports.

There are 719 contests for 26 athletic sports and 248 competitions for 22 mass sports.

"The combination of athletics and mass sports is an innovation of the games, which aim to engage the residents' enthusiasm in sports and fitness activities, as well as facilitating the integration of sports with tourism," the official said.

The official noted that the provincial games have been an incubator for elite athletes over the past decades.

These elite athletes include Su Yiming, who garnered one gold and one silver at the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Games. He was also the first athlete from Shanxi to win a Winter Olympics gold and first Chinese snowboarding champion.

The list of star players also includes Li Yajie, Shanxi's first world champion in diving after she won a gold in the women's 1-meter springboard diving event during the 2022 World Aquatics Championships held in Budapest in June; the Shanxi archery team who won the national championship earlier this year; Yang Chang, a champion of this year's national swimming championship; and Zhao Yating, the winner of four gold medals and one silver at this year's national championships for rhythmic gymnastics.



The official noted that Shanxi's athletes had won one gold and three silvers altogether at the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics and the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. In 2022 alone, athletes from Shanxi won a total of 10 gold medals in international events.

The official especially highlighted the enthusiasm of residents for various sports during the event. While hundreds of amateur athletes are taking part in the games' mass sports competitions, a much greater number of Datong residents are participating in sports and fitness activities outside the games' venues, which are organized by communities and even themselves.

In Shanxi as a whole, mass sports and fitness activities are becoming increasingly popular thanks to the sustained growth of sports venues and facilities for residents over the past years.

Official statistics show that there were more than 116,000 venues in Shanxi for mass sports and fitness activities by the end of 2022. This can translate into 2.56 square meters per capita, an increase of 0.15 sq m compared with the figure in 2021.

It is reported that 585 community-organized sports events were held in Shanxi last year, engaging the participation of more than 50,000 people.

Data from the Shanxi Sport Bureau show that more than 36.4 percent of Shanxi residents were frequent participants in sports and fitness activities in 2022.

The enthusiasm for sports among residents has also boosted the development of the sports and fitness industry in Shanxi.

The Shanxi Sport Bureau released sports industry-related data for the first time in mid-March, saying that Shanxi's sports industry generated a gross profit of 16.83 billion yuan (\$2.33 billion) in 2021, accounting for 0.75 percent of the provincial GDP that year.

Zhang Jufeng and Zhou Huiyang contributed to this story.

Investors tempted in by business opportunities

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Viewing investment promotion as key to assisting economic transformation and high-quality development, the North China province of Shanxi has intensified its efforts to attract investors over the past several months.

One recent move was that the Shanxi provincial government hosted an evening gala in Tianjin on June 26, prior to the opening of the 14th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, or Summer Davos Forum.

While showcasing authentic Shanxi cuisine and culture to the forum's attendees, the provincial authorities introduced local business opportunities to attract the attention of global companies and investors. These include an ongoing economic transformation, energy revolution and the development of characteristic towns with specialty industries, as well as its landmark tourist attractions.

Before this, Shanxi hosted the Innovation Annual Meeting of the 2023 Yabuli China Entrepreneurs Forum on June 17-18 in the provincial capital of Taiyuan.

The Yabuli forum is one of the most influential platforms for exchanges among entrepreneurs in China.

At the event, Shanxi authorities said they hoped to use the forum and its members for investment promotion — and their efforts were successful.

Another heavyweight event for investment promotion was the Shanxi Conference for Investment Promotion held in mid-April.

At the conference, Lan Fo'an, secretary of the Shanxi Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, introduced to business delegates Shanxi's unique advantages for business development. These include a strong energy industry, abundant natural and tourism resources, proximity to the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, booming development of industrial zones and characteristic towns as well as the flourishing growth of emerging sectors.

Sun Yuejie, executive deputy general manager of Shanxi Shangtai Lithium Battery Technology, was one of the business representatives attending the conference. He said the robust development of his company is an endorsement of Shanxi's sound business environment and the local authorities' practical approach to development.



Shanxi hosts the Innovation Annual Meeting of the 2023 Yabuli China Entrepreneurs Forum in the provincial capital, Taiyuan, on June 17-18. RUAN YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanxi Shangtai, a producer of anode material, is a major supplier to the renowned lithium battery producer CATL.

Sun said since Shangtai settled in the Shanxi city of Jinzhong in 2017, it rapidly developed into the largest anode material producer in China in terms of market share.

"We have capitalized on the powerful coal industry in Shanxi," Sun said. He explained that graphite, the major ingredient for anode material, is a derivative of coal.

The executive noted that the company's development has benefited from the local authorities' industrial planning.

"Jinzhong is cultivating a new energy vehicle industry as its emerging growth engine," Sun said. "And the anode material sector represented by Shangtai is deemed as the core of the industry."

He went on to say that Jinzhong has developed an industrial park dedicated to the anode material sector, which is now the largest of its kind in the country.

Like Jinzhong, almost every city in Shanxi has appeal to investors.

The city of Yuncheng, for instance, is tapping into the potential of emerging industries like intelligent manufacturing, automobiles, biopharmaceuticals and new materials, all the while upgrading its traditional industries like coal mining.

In the city of Jincheng, the industries of coal-bed methane, photoelectronics, tourism, modern services and the digital economy are emerging, presenting new opportunities for investment.

Luiliang city's unique offering is its hydrogen industry chain which covers the production of hydrogen, manufacture of hydrogen-fueled vehicles, construction of hydrogen filling stations and other services. This is forecast to be a cluster with a scale of more than 100 billion yuan (\$13.87 billion) in terms of annual output value.

Datong city in northern Shanxi is close to Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei. Its development plan is aligned to its location with the aim to accommodate industries transferred from its three neighbors.

During the first half of this year, Datong-based businesses signed agreements with counterparts in Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei for 49 investment projects with funds totaling 32.85 billion yuan.

Yan Jie contributed to this story.

'Little giants' show their might with innovative products

By YUAN SHENGGAO

High-quality small and medium-sized enterprises are playing an increasingly important role in the economic development of Shanxi province, especially those in the "specialized, refined, differential and innovative" categories.

As these businesses focus on segmented markets, feature innovation, possess high market share and boast cutting-edge technologies, they are viewed as a vital force to drive Shanxi's economic transformation, a move that highlights upgrading traditional industries toward the directions of cleaner and more efficient operations and fostering emerging industries as new growth engines.

In Shanxi, leading the specialized, refined, differential and innovative enterprises are "little giants": 139 at national level and 363 at provincial level, according to local statistics.

In China, little giants refer to

SMEs that are in the early stage of development and focus on cutting-edge sectors such as new generation information technology, advanced equipment manufacturing, new energy, new materials and biomedicine.

Taiyuan-based Jimbo Bio-Pharmaceutical is one such national-level little giant. It went public on the Beijing Stock Exchange on July 20, becoming the third company in Shanxi listed in this bourse for innovative SMEs.

Jimbo's cutting-edge product is recombined 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, according to Yang Xia, founder and chairwoman of the company.

Yang said the company began the research and development of the medicine in 2009, one year after its founding.



Workers weld weather detectors on the assembly line at a tech-driven small business in Taiyuan, Shanxi province.

RUAN YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Unlike other industries, the R&D of new medicines needs more time — at least 10 years," Yang said. "And it also requires a company to consistently invest in R&D and continuously improve its innovative strength."

This is exactly the case of Jimbo, which announced the successful development of the collagen in 2018,

after the painstaking efforts of its research team.

Yang said Jimbo is now one of the few enterprises in the world that mass produce the collagen. Its volume production began in 2021, after winning approval from the National Medical Products Administration.

In May this year, the first phase of Jimbo's synthetic biology park became operational. It is now the largest production facility for human-origin collagen in China. Upon the completion of all its planned phases, the project is expected to become a huge facility with annual output value surpassing 10 billion yuan (\$1.39 billion), according to Yang.

Jiashida Robot is another Shanxi company on the list of national-level little giants.

According to Sun Xiaopu, the company's vice-president for technology, Jiashida began to develop intelligent robots for household use in 2012.

It is now a leading domestic producer of window-swiping robots in terms of market share. The products have also been sold to more than 50 countries, Sun said.

Behind its rapid growth is heavy investment in R&D, said Sun, who added that Jiashida is the holder of six overseas patents and 134 Chinese patents.

Wenlong Zhongmei, based in Taiyuan, is another example of how a little giant company can play a crucial role in upgrading Shanxi's coal industry.

The company is the developer of separated-strata grouting technology, which is used to support mining shafts, improving efficiency and safety.

Huoer Xinhe Coal Mine in the Shanxi city of Changzhi is a client of Wenlong Zhongmei. It began to use the separated-strata grouting technology in early 2022.

"Thanks to the technology, we have seen the mining recovery rate increase from 75 percent to 89 percent in one and a half years," said an executive of the coal mine.

He added that as disposed fly ash

and recycled wastewater from mining are used for grouting, the technology also features great environmental benefits.

He said over the period, a total of 430,000 metric tons of fly ash and 300,000 tons of recycled water have been used for grouting.

"The improving recovery rate and the use of recycled resources mean a direct benefit worth 770 million yuan during the period," the executive said.

Fan Xunzhu, general manager of Wenlong Zhongmei, said he expects his company to play a role in the low-carbon and sustainable development of China's coal industry.

"China is the No 1 coal producer and consumer in the world, with coal accounting for about 56 percent of the consumption of all energy resources," Fan said. "We hope to promote our technologies to more mining sites for the fulfillment of China's carbon peak and neutrality targets."

Cao Tingting contributed to this story.