



From left: The Qingdao Jiaodong International Airport. The Qingdao port of Shandong Port Group. The Qingdao SCODA Pearl International Expo Center. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Showcasing Qingdao's cooperative efforts

City a gateway to land-sea connectivity

By WANG JINHUI

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Qingdao, a coastal city of East China's Shandong province, is continuing to take great strides in enhancing its role as a hub city along major economic corridors such as the New Eurasian Land Bridge while mapping out plans to boost maritime cooperation under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Expanding the market

The Qingdao-based China-SCO Local Economic and Trade Cooperation Demonstration Area, or SCODA, facilitates land-sea connectivity and common development between East and West, and by serving as a significant logistics supply chain solution for trade between Shandong and SCO member countries, it has opened rail routes to cities such as Tashkent in Uzbekistan, Almaty in Kazakhstan, Dushanbe in Tajikistan, Baku in Azerbaijan and Minsk in Belarus.

Through the first eight months of this year, the number of China-Europe freight train trips operated by SCODA's multimodal transport logistics center reached 682, up 30.4 percent year-on-year. The demonstration area also introduced China's first one-stop public service platform for trade and economic cooperation with SCO member countries at the local level, providing users with comprehensive services that integrate trade, customs clearance, logistics and finance throughout the entire process and value chain.

The 2.0 version of the platform, launched in June, focuses on sectors such as exports, local currency settlement, barter trade and mutual recognition of regulations. It has attracted about 5,000 domestic and foreign companies in 27 industries, completed more than 6,000 customs clearance applications and realized a customs declaration amount of more than 20 billion yuan (\$2.74 billion).

Zhang Dong, deputy director of SCODA's administrative committee, said the SCO International Investment and Trade Expo held in Qingdao in June bridged international trade, business cooperation and exchanges between domestic companies and SCO member countries. The expo attracted 330 companies and institutions from 34 countries and regions, exhibiting more than 10,000 characteristic products from SCO member countries. The total transaction reached approximately 1 billion yuan.

FTZ boosts trade

Over the past four years, the Qingdao area of the China (Shandong) Pilot Free Trade Zone, a high-level platform for the city's opening-up, has introduced 285 innovative policies to boost economic development, cross-border e-commerce and foreign trade. Actual use of foreign capital in the zone increased from \$533 million to \$850 million from 2020 to 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 26.28 percent. From 2019 to 2022, the total trade volume of goods in the Qingdao FTZ surged from 97.5 billion yuan to 201.3 billion yuan, with an average annual growth rate of 27.33 percent.

The Qingdao FTZ has explored



Qingdao is an attractive coastal city of East China's Shandong province. ZHANG JIANHUA / FOR CHINA DAILY

new models of cross-border e-commerce and pioneered the 9810 export tax refund with the concept of "refund upon warehouse entry". In 2022, the import volume of cross-border e-commerce exceeded 5.2 billion yuan, accounting for 71.4 percent of Shandong's total. It also achieved \$7.77 billion in international income and expenditure in offshore trade in 2022, accounting for more than 80 percent of Shandong's total.

The Qingdao FTZ is the first in the country to achieve paperless operations for bulk cargo electronic bills of lading for imports, with a customs clearance time of only 22 minutes, increasing overall efficiency by 43.9 percent. In addition, it

has conducted pilot projects for cross-border RMB settlements. As of the end of June, Qingdao had 384 branches of 47 banks that have launched cross-border RMB settlement services, benefiting more than 15,000 foreign-related enterprises from some 150 countries and regions.

Shipping routes

Shandong's Qingdao Port is committed to enhancing the dual-circulation new development paradigm under the Belt and Road Initiative, constructing the Northeast Asia international shipping hub and ensuring stability of the global supply chain. The port added 15 new container shipping routes, four new

inland ports and opened two sea-rail intermodal train services in the first half of this year. The sea-rail intermodal container volume reached 1.15 million twenty-foot equivalent units, an increase of 18.6 percent over the same period of 2022.

Since the beginning of the year, Qingdao Port has added 10 shipping routes under the BRI, and container volumes in countries and regions involved in the BRI have maintained double-digit growth.

Enterprise service center

As China's first comprehensive business service platform focusing on economic and trade cooperation under the framework of the Region-

al Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the RCEP Shandong Enterprise Service Center started operation on June 29, 2021.

Through a government-led and market-oriented approach, it is a pioneer in business services within the RCEP. By cooperating with customs, taxation and trade promotion organizations as well as administrative approval departments, the facility, which includes 10 centers and 18 service windows, gathers resources from various links in the trade chain and channels them into three main sections: public services, value-added services and supporting services.

Other platforms

With the theme of "Harmonious Coexistence in the Ocean Decade", the 2023 East Asia Marine Cooperation Platform Qingdao Forum held June 27-29 in Qingdao West Coast New Area brought together leaders of 96 marine organizations from 51 countries and regions and nearly 400 ocean experts, economists and cultural scholars to discuss such issues as marine ecological protection, disaster prevention and reduction, and international cooperation and governance.

Qingdao is also expanding its "circle of friends" through cultural exchanges. As an example, the Qingdao International Invitation Exhibition of Watercolor at the Qingdao Publishing Art Museum from Aug 27 to Sept 26 showcased more than 40 watercolor works from 24 countries, and allowed local residents to enhance their understanding of international art while promoting mutual respect and harmonious coexistence among different civilizations.

Companies that helped Belt, Road construction

By WANG JINHUI

Some high-profile enterprises in Qingdao, Shandong province, have expanded their overseas operations while becoming pioneers in construction of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Designed and manufactured by CRRC Qingdao Sifang, a Chinese rolling stock manufacturer based in Qingdao, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway at Halim Station in Jakarta, Indonesia, started commercial operation on Oct 2. As a flagship project of BRI cooperation between China and Indonesia, the 142-kilometer railway has a speed of 350 km per hour and connects the Indonesian capital Jakarta with the tourist destination city of Bandung — reducing the previous travel time from 3.5 hours to 40 minutes.

Zhang Fangtao, chief designer of the project, said the railway adopts China's cutting-edge technologies in such sectors as speed, intelligence, environmental adaptability, comfort and customization, and applies standards according to the local environment and track conditions in Indonesia. It brings a cutting-edge high-speed transportation mode to Indonesia and facilitates greater regional economic and social development.

Meanwhile, Haier, a multinational home appliances and consumer electronics company headquartered in Qingdao, has established 22 industrial parks, 103 manufacturing centers and 103 trading companies in countries and regions involved in the BRI. While meeting local market demands, the company has also created a significant number of jobs and promoted the comprehensive upgrade of technolo-



The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway is a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative cooperation between China and Indonesia. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

gy, standards and industrial chains. Huang Decheng, president of the South Asia branch at Haier Smart Home, said Haier started building its factory in Pakistan in 2001. From construction of a 150,000-square-meter industrial park in Lahore, capital of Punjab, Pakistan, to production of the first Haier washing machine there in May 2002, Haier set a record for the fastest industrial construction in Pakistan.

In 2006, the Haier-Ruba Economic Zone, enlarged from Haier's industrial park in Pakistan, was inaugurated, becoming China's first overseas economic and trade cooperation zone approved by the Ministry of Commerce. The industrial park mainly produces refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, freezers, televisions, microwaves and water dispensers.

With the launch of the BRI and the remarkable achievements of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Haier-Ruba Economic Zone has brought key benefits to residents of both countries and added strong impetus to regional prosperity.

As of 2022, Haier has been Pakistan's top producer of white goods appliances for eight consecutive years, with air conditioners and washing machines ranking first for 15 and 10 consecutive years, respectively. The company also jointly established an air-conditioning laboratory

with Pakistan's ministry of science and technology, helping the country establish an energy efficiency standard system.

Huang said the goal for Haier's initial entry into the global market is to create independent brands. In response to the special needs of users in different regions around the world, the company has implemented a "three-in-one" layout of localized research and development, manufacturing and marketing.

Chinese home appliance maker Hisense is another typical example of Qingdao companies' endeavor in exploring international markets, with overseas companies and offices currently serving 126 countries. In the first half of this year, Hisense TV ranked among the top three brands in Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, and it has also achieved good results in Malaysia, Thailand and Israel.

Hisense regards localization as the essence of globalization and adheres to the "Local for Local" operation strategy in a layout of production, sales and research. It has established 10 industrial parks and production centers in markets such as the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Serbia, Poland and Thailand, as well as R&D centers in Italy, Slovenia and Dubai, enabling the country to gain insights into consumers and markets, meet differentiated demands and achieve synergy in production, sales and research.

Summit signs record number of foreign investment projects

By WANG JINHUI

The fourth Qingdao Multinationals Summit, held last week in Qingdao city of Shandong province, showcased China's latest achievements in economic development and injected strong momentum into the market.

In living up to its theme of "Multinationals and China", the summit, jointly organized by the Ministry of Commerce and Shandong province, built a channel for high-quality two-way investment and achieved fruitful results by bringing together political figures, top officials from international organizations and leaders from 422 multinationals in 36 countries and regions.

In his address during the opening ceremony, Lin Wu, Party secretary of Shandong, said: "We will facilitate trade, optimize services and continue to create an internationalized, market-oriented and rule of law-based business environment for multinationals."

The summit hosted 30 events in 14 categories, signing a record 194 foreign investment projects worth about \$20.6 billion. Investors came from more than 20 countries and regions, including Japan, South Korea, the United States and Germany.

Geng Tao, mayor of Qingdao, said the event provided a vital platform for multinationals to invest in China and bolstered deep communication and cooperation between Qingdao and multinationals' leaders. He said Qingdao has set a model for the country's open cooperation, adding: "To ensure high-quality service we established a joint



The fourth Qingdao Multinationals Summit is held in the city from Oct 10 to 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

meeting office and 10 working teams, developed personalized reception plans for heavyweight guests and designed inspection routes meticulously. We hope our services left a wonderful impression and demonstrated the openness and investment attraction of Shandong."

Dialogue between Qingdao and International City Partners, a significant event during the summit, invited leaders from numerous multinationals such as the United Kingdom's AstraZeneca, South Korea's CJ Group and Germany's ZF Friedrichshafen, as well as renowned experts and scholars, to share views on common development and reach multiple consensus. Key projects, including those invested by Fortune Global 500 companies such as Trafifigra Group, COFCO Group and HBIS Group with a total investment of \$3.45 billion, were signed.

"By establishing a comprehensive docking mechanism before, during and after the summit, our aim is to deepen practical cooperation," Geng said, adding that in the next step Qingdao will further optimize services and safeguard the smooth and effective implementation of signed projects. The city will also enhance regular exchanges through promotion events, negotiation meetings and investment attraction activities while making full use of favorable policies such as the Action Plan for Attracting Manufacturing Multinational Corporations and the Global Investment Attraction Action Plan.

In addition, Qingdao will create a fertile ground and business-friendly environment based on the market, rule of law and internationalization to boost its overall development of multinationals, Geng added.