

Demonstration zone plays integral role in reinvention of Shanxi

Decades of heavy industry being replaced by lighthouse factories and technology enterprises as province seeks to future-proof its economy



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Since the North China province of Shanxi was designated by the State to implement a transformation campaign for resources-reliant local economies more than a decade ago, the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone has played a leading role in this historic mission.

Shanxi has been among the most important suppliers of energy resources, especially coal, to the country for many decades. However, the challenges to economic development resulting from heavy reliance on coal mining and other heavy industries had become conspicuous since the end of the last century. As a result, local authorities began to implement an economic transformation move under the guidance of the country's central authorities more than 10 years ago.

This campaign features the upgrading of traditional industries toward the direction of cleaner, safer and more efficient operations and fostering emerging industries as

new growth engines.

The Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone, which was founded in 2010 with the initial name of the National Pilot Zone for Transforming Resources-Reliant Economies, was the first major establishment of Shanxi to respond to this mission of transformation. It got its current name in November 2016.

Over the past decade and especially the past six years, the zone, located between the two central Shanxi cities of Taiyuan and Jinzhong, has become a beacon of high-quality development in Shanxi and a magnet for investment.

The zone is designed to foster strategic emerging industrial clusters including advanced manufacturing; the digital economy; information technology; semiconductors; synthetic biology; photovoltaics; new materials and modern services. And today, all the sectors have formed an advanced industrial system, thanks to the hefty investment made by businesses in Shanxi and beyond.

This year marks a milestone of the zone in terms of attracting investment and launching significant industrial projects.

A total of 24 large projects relating to economic transformation, with a special focus on the sectors of advanced manufacturing, digitalization and modern services, have been

launched to date this year. It is noteworthy that their total pledged investment amounted to 120 billion yuan (\$16.54 billion), almost equal to the total paid-in investment it secured in the past six years.

The largest project is a megasized comprehensive new energy facility funded by Shanxi-based Jinko Solar. With a total pledged investment of 56 billion yuan, the project broke ground on Sept 26. Its first phase is scheduled to be operational in the first quarter of 2024.

When it becomes fully operational in 2026, the facility will be capable of producing photovoltaic — or solar power — components with an annual capacity of 56 gigawatts, making it the largest in the industry globally.

Industry insiders said this is a significant project in Shanxi's economic transformation and energy revolution campaigns as it is expected to form a powerful new energy industry chain in the province.

On the same day of the groundbreaking ceremony, Jinko and the administrative committee of the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone jointly hosted an investment promotion fair.

At the event, Jinko and the zone signed agreements with 36 enterprises in the solar power industry chain to launch upstream or downstream operations in relation with



Construction on Jinko Solar's megasized comprehensive new energy facility is ongoing at the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Jinko. Total pledged investment in these operations amounted to 20 billion yuan.

Another milestone project that the demonstration zone secured this year is a fiberglass manufacturing facility launched by Taishan Fiberglass Group headquartered in Tai'an, Shandong province.

Beginning construction in the Yangqu Industrial Park — a part of the demonstration zone — in early July, this project with a total planned investment of 7 billion yuan will be capable of producing 300,000 metric tons, or 3.6 billion yuan worth, of fiberglass annually when its first phase becomes operational in 2025.

Tang Zhiyao, board chairman of Taishan Fiberglass Group, said that this facility is expected to become a lighthouse factory in the worldwide fiberglass industry.

With eye-catching tags such as high efficiency, intelligence and environmental friendliness, the lighthouse factories are considered to represent the highest level of intelli-

gent, digitalized manufacturing in the world.

Industry insiders said that the zone's success in attracting significant investments is a result of local authorities' efforts in improving the business environment.

While fulfilling its mission to pilot economic transformation, the zone is a test site of the province's institutional reforms, which aim to create a better environment for entrepreneurship.

Since the beginning of this year, the zone's authorities have renewed their efforts for business environment optimization, aiming to improve the confidence of investors and local entrepreneurs.

The latest policy move for the ease of doing business was an action plan announced by the zone's administrative committee on May 10 for institutional reforms related to improving administrative services.

By delegating power in business approval, streamlining licensing systems and providing whole-process

assistance for enterprises' operations and policies for easier market access, the administrative committee pledged that the period from a project's agreement signing to construction will be shortened to at least 58 days from the average of 238 days.

This was exactly the case with the Jinko Solar and Taishan Fiberglass projects. According to an executive of Jinko Solar, the company signed the agreement of the new energy facility in the demonstration zone in May and construction of the project started in September. "This is an unexpected efficiency for a giant project like ours," the executive said.

Liu Xiaohua, an executive in charge of the Taishan Fiberglass project, said it signed a land use agreement with the zone on May 16, started leveling land two days later and began construction in less than two months. "The efficiency will offer a strong guarantee for our scheduled operations," Liu said.

Yang Yu contributed to this story.

Diverse cultural heritage highlighted by exhibition

By HAO NAN

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More than 300 inheritors of intangible cultural heritage from nine provinces and regions along the Yellow River recently gathered in Taiyuan, Shanxi province, to showcase the rich culture cultivated in the river's drainage basin.

They were attracted by the Yellow River Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition, which ran from Nov 7 to 11.

The event also displayed more than 600 intangible cultural heritage items in diverse and new forms, empowering the traditional Yellow River culture, a root of Chinese civilization, with new energy and vitality.

Functioning like an intangible cultural heritage museum, the exhibition presented a group of more than 500 cloth tigers in different sizes and styles at the entrance area, drawing a large number of visitors.

At the center of the group is a Lihou Tiger, the largest one of these toy tigers.

The Lihou Tiger toy produced in Licheng county, Changzhi city, features a chubby shape and bright colors. It has a history of 2,700 years and represents blessings and good wishes.

The toy also possesses such meanings as the ever-flowing Yellow River, and brave and vigorous children in certain areas.

Not far from the tiger toys, rafts made of inflated sheep skins also caught the attention of visitors.

Coming from Lanzhou, Gansu province, the rafts used to serve as an important transport tool for the people in regions along the Yellow River's upper and middle reaches in the 1940s and 1950s, when land transportation was less developed.

A matrix of *huamo*, or colorfully patterned steamed buns, was also worth viewing. They were created based on the 24 solar terms of the traditional Chinese solar calendar.

Each of them was marked with the name of the solar term and decorated with related auspicious animals. The *huamo* for Spring equinox, the fourth solar term of the year, for example, depicted a picture of swallows flying back to their hometown and butterflies dancing among flowers.

Yang Gang, a Shanxi provincial intangible cultural heritage inheritor, and his team made these *huamo* in about 40 days.

Rich in historical culture, Shanxi has 182 national intangible cultural heritage items, including some relat-



Cloth toys made by traditional techniques are displayed at the intangible cultural heritage exhibition. LI ZHAOMIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

ed to food processing, and 149 State-level inheritors.

In the province's exhibition area, many local foods such as fried glutinous oil cakes, lamb soup, fried dough twists and glutinous rice balls were made on site, so that visitors could taste genuine flavors of the local cuisine.

The production of Shanxi's flour-made food can also serve as a kind of performance. During the five-day exhibition, related shows were performed three times a day to display the culture related to Shanxi food.

Inheritors Wang Yanfang and Xu Zhenhai, for instance, made knife-cut noodles and scissor-cut noodles while riding a unicycle and walking on stilts, respectively.

To better attract the young generation, the exhibition used digital technologies to promote the Yellow River culture, and integrated online games with the intangible cultural heritage.

Such a combination has already been practiced before. Launched in 2021, an online game named Wangxiang Shanhai, which literally means the imagination of mountains and seas, was inspired by 12 intangible cultural heritage items from regions along the Yellow River.

The exhibition also set up a "Meeting the Yellow River" cultural corridor, where visitors could listen to folk songs and music played by traditional musical instruments.

Wang Li contributed to this story.

E-government in action as public and business services used online

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Digitalization can play a crucial role in increasing administrative efficiency and improving the business environment because it can offer round-the-clock administrative services and allows information sharing for people in any place and anytime.

This is the case in Shanxi province, which is innovating its governance and administrative services with the extensive use of technologies including big data, cloud computing, blockchain and artificial intelligence.

After years of development, Shanxi has witnessed a boom in the construction of e-governments at various levels and regions, with online administrative service platforms achieving full coverage, from provincial to village levels.

Despite the achievement, the authorities of Shanxi have recently renewed efforts to accelerate provincewide e-government construction. The focus is on building a unified online administrative service system that integrates resources and realizes interconnectivity among various regions and government institutions, according to Hu Xingcai, an official at the Shanxi Administrative Approval Services Bureau.

Hu said that the online administrative service systems in Shanxi are now integrated under the scheme of "one bureau, one center and one company".

He said the "three ones" refer to the Shanxi Administrative Approval Services Bureau, the Shanxi e-Government Service Center and

Shanxi Cloud Era Technology Company.

While the company offers technological and infrastructure support and the center offers guidance, appraisal and big data services, the bureau is providing one-stop administrative services by integrating functions of government institutions at provincial level and various regions inside Shanxi.

"In the past, administrative approval involved procedures related to various government institutions in different regions," Hu said. "But all these can be handled by logging onto the e-government portal of Shanxi, based on which the bureau is offering services relating to business applications, registration and approval, as well as civil affairs."

The official added that the e-government platform has now realized interconnectivity among 114 provincial-level institutions and a number of institutions at city, county and township levels.

At present, about 91 percent of administrative procedures at provincial level and more than 83 percent of procedures at county level can be handled online.

Hu said such an online system offers great efficiency in terms of saving time and allowing cross-region handling of applications and registrations.

Shanxi has also made progress in implementing the interprovincial handling of 209 administrative service items, according to the official.

An Xiaoyi contributed to this story.



The Shanxi Big Data Center, operated by Cloud Era Technology, supports Shanxi's online administrative service system.

AN XIAOYI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Trade cooperation at fore of investment meeting

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The branded products made in Shanxi and investment and trade opportunities in this North China province were showcased to the business community in Singapore and the rest of Southeast Asia during a promotional event last week.

The event, Shanxi-Singapore Investment Promotion Conference, was held in Singapore on Nov 11. It was a part of a large promotional campaign called Shanxi Brands on the Silk Road, a move aiming to enhance trade and investment cooperation between Shanxi and the countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Singapore is a country involved in the BRI. It is also an important trade and investment partner for China. Since 2013, China has been the largest trading partner for Singapore for nine consecutive years and Singapore has been one of the largest sources of foreign investment in China.

Benefiting from growing bilateral ties, Shanxi province has also deepened economic cooperation with Singapore. Statistics show that trade between Shanxi and Singapore amounted to 4.24 billion yuan (\$584.27 million) in the first nine months of this year. The amount made Singapore the fourth-largest trade partner for Shanxi among the Belt and Road countries and the fifth-largest among the member countries of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Representatives attending the promotion conference said that there is still great potential for further economic cooperation considering the complementary nature of the economies of both sides.

Li Suet Man, vice-chairman of Singapore-Chinese Business Association — an organization representing the interests of the Singaporean-Chinese business community, delivered a speech at the conference. He said that Singapore is one of the most dynamic

emerging economies in the world and is a hub of trade, finance and shipping in the Asia-Pacific region. It also has advantages in sectors such as science and technology, advanced manufacturing, environmental protection and logistics.

"We will continue to bring our businesses in the finance, environmental protection and advanced manufacturing sectors to Shanxi, facilitating collaborations building on our competitive strengths" Li said.

Li Haiyuan, chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, introduced Shanxi's business opportunities at the conference. He said that Shanxi is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization and its 5,000 years of history has left numerous resources for the cultural tourism industry.

Li Haiyuan also said that Shanxi is implementing a number of development initiatives, including an economic transformation from coal

reliance to industrial diversification; an energy revolution program to upgrade traditional coal mining and grow its new energy sectors; and campaigns to develop a new hub of opening-up for China's inland regions and to build a base for advanced manufacturing in China's central regions. He added that these fields can create huge opportunities for trade and investment cooperation between the two sides.

"We hope to strengthen collaborations with Singapore's business community in areas of advanced manufacturing, the digital economy, new energy, biomedicine, logistics, financial technology and legal services," the Shanxi official said.

During the event, businesses and industrial associations from the two sides reached agreements for cooperation in a range of areas that include tourism development, imports and exports, and investment.

Meng Ting contributed to this story.