

BUSINESS

Flooring sector seen on steady growth track

Industry showing strong momentum riding on tech innovation, green efforts

By LI JIAYING
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China's flooring industry is expecting robust growth and to provide the international market with more high-quality products and services, foreign executives said.

The flooring market in China has shown strong growth momentum over the past year and achieved notable progress in technological innovation and sustainable development, further enhancing its competitiveness in the global market, said Arno Reich, senior vice-president of German trade fair company Deutsche Messe AG.

"We believe that in China, and also in the Asia-Pacific region — which is about 30 percent of the global flooring market — will lie growth in the future," Reich said.

"China is a very huge market for flooring solutions. It doesn't only consume but also produces several flooring products," said Sonia Wedell-Castellano, global director at Deutsche Messe AG.

"I believe in the past couple of years, China has almost overhauled European producers because they are very innovative, very fast, with very advanced technologies," Wedell-Castellano said, adding that China-made products are usually more price competitive and also cater to the needs of the European market.

Eyeing the potential of the country's flooring industry, Hannover Milano Fairs Shanghai — the joint venture of Deutsche Messe and Fiera Milano in China — announced on Wednesday the establishment of DACF Exhibitions Shanghai Ltd by joining hands with local fair company Globus Events.

The new JV will focus on expanding business opportunities in flooring sectors within China and across the broader Asia-Pacific region through carpet and floor-covering show DOMOTEX Asia.

"It's a reflection of our long-term commitment and confidence in the Chinese market. We hope this move will deeply integrate the unique advantages of both parties in industry resources, professional knowledge and market influence, to jointly make new achievements in the broader exhibition sector," Reich said.

Through the JV, the German company is also aiming to strengthen forces with local partners in organizing a flooring show that caters to special visitor and customer structures of the Chinese market, as innovation in sustainability and eco-friendly products are the new trends in the country's flooring market.

"We have noticed opportunities provided by the world's growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products here, which is the core of how we can cater to the markets of tomorrow," Reich said.

In its 26th year, DOMOTEX Asia will be launched in Shanghai from May 26-28, and is expected to host over 1,600 exhibitors from both domestic and international markets.

"By bringing together participants from around the world to this most relevant Asian flooring platform, we invite everyone to not only showcase the latest trends, but also look for new developments and innovations in the flooring industry," he said.

"After being introduced to China, our flagship exhibitions have attracted the active participation of high-quality enterprises and buyers and achieved great success. This is inseparable from the huge consumption vitality and potential of the Chinese market," Reich said.

Through the company's interactions with exhibitors and visitors, he said they have found widespread optimism about the potential and development of the Chinese market.

According to market consultancy Mordor Intelligence, China's floor covering market is expected to register a compound annual growth rate of more than 7 percent during 2024-29, with the continuous development of the real estate industry and the increasing acceptance of aesthetic needs likely to boost demand for flooring in China.

As a foreign-funded enterprise, Reich said Deutsche Messe will strengthen its collaboration with local partners and offer more shows to Chinese visitors in the future.

"Besides major shows in top-tier cities such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, we also aim to extend more events to more lower-tier cities for more possibilities," he said.



Arno Reich



The world's first metro train made with carbon fiber material debuts in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Friday. DENG WANGQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Metro train using carbon fiber material makes debut

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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The world's first metro train constructed using carbon fiber material made its debut on Line 1 in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Friday, heralding a more environmentally friendly future for subway systems.

Developed by CRRC Qingdao Sifang and Qingdao Metro, the metro train, dubbed CETROVO 1.0, offers advantages such as weight reduction and energy efficiency.

"By employing carbon fiber composite materials, the train achieves an impressive 11 percent weight

reduction compared to traditional metal trains, leading to enhanced energy efficiency with a 7 percent decrease in operational energy consumption," said Liu Jinzhu, a senior designer at CRRC Qingdao Sifang.

This reduction equates to an annual decrease of around 130 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions, Liu said.

The lighter weight of the CETROVO 1.0 results in reduced wear on wheels and tracks, lowering demand for maintenance.

The metro train also incorporates advanced digital twin technology through an intelligent operation platform.

The smart system enables intelligent fault detection, health status assessment and optimization of maintenance schedules, reducing maintenance costs. The adoption of new materials and technologies is expected to lower the train's total lifecycle maintenance expenses by 22 percent.

In addition, passengers can enjoy a more comfortable ride due to the superior vibration and noise isolation effects of the carbon fiber composite materials, said Liu.

The exterior design of the carbon fiber train is based on charcoal black, with blue and yellow lines symboliz-

ing the waves and sunlight, showcasing the coastal features of Qingdao.

"The seats are more comfortable. It is also less noisy than other subways. I won't feel cold when holding the uprights," said Jia Xiaobei, a passenger.

Line 1 serves as a crucial route in Qingdao's urban rail transit network, spanning 60 kilometers and featuring 41 stations. With a daily passenger volume exceeding 400,000, Line 1 is a vital transportation artery for the city. Currently, the CETROVO 1.0 train operates on a section of the line and will progressively extend its service to the entire route.

4-seat fixed-wing aircraft adds choice for winter sports fans

By ZHANG YU in Shijiazhuang
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As Zhangjiakou, a renowned winter tourism destination in Hebei province, welcomes visitors from around the world during the peak season for winter sports, the increasing popularity of low-altitude flights is expected to inject new momentum into the local tourism industry.

A four-seat fixed-wing aircraft from Zhuhai, Guangdong province landed at Zhangjiakou Ningyuan Airport at 5:25 pm on Jan 5, marking the inaugural flight of the nation's first cross-provincial low-altitude route, customized for ice and snow tourism.

Upon arrival in Zhangjiakou, passengers were shuttled to ski resorts in Chongli district, which hosted most of the snow events during the 2022 Winter Olympic Games. They were scheduled to enjoy a three- to five-day skiing and tourism experience in Zhangjiakou.

During the flight, there were stop-over airports that provided essential services such as refueling, safety monitoring, maintenance, meals and accommodation, while a low-altitude flight service station in Zhangjiakou offered comprehensive services including flight plan approvals and aviation meteorological information.

"The route will leverage the cultural and tourism resources of both Zhangjiakou and Zhuhai, exploring a new format of integrated development through low-altitude travel," Zhang Minghai, an official with the Zhangjiakou municipal transportation bureau, was quoted by local media Zhangjiakou Daily as saying.

The city boasts abundant ice and snow tourism resources and favorable airspace conditions with three navigable airports, making it an ideal destination for such initiatives, Zhang said.

Furthermore, the Zhangjiakou

low-altitude flight service station has been designated by the Civil Aviation Administration of China's North China regional administration as a pilot project for distinctive low-altitude flight services in the region, offering users "one-stop" services such as flight approvals, aviation meteorological information, alerts and assistance for rescue operations.

The launch of this customized route is expected to attract more skiing enthusiasts from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area to Zhangjiakou, enriching their winter sports experiences.

"We aim to leverage Zhangjiakou's winter sports advantages to promote low-altitude applications and explore the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) operational model for low-altitude scenarios," said Zhou Ge, chairman of Yuxiang Shengtai General Aviation Co, one of the main organizers of the flight.

According to Zhou, the FBO

model provides integrated services such as flight plan applications, route and meteorological information support, coordination at general airports, refueling, maintenance and ensuring safe aircraft operations, serving as aviation service stewards for low-altitude aircraft.

"While the FBO operational model is well-established for domestic business aviation, its application in general aviation, especially for low-altitude flights, is still developing," Zhou said.

He added that the complexities and challenges of low-altitude flight procedures exist, particularly for long-distance flights, underscoring the need for a support system to ensure smooth and worry-free flights for aviation enthusiasts.

Except for tourism, low-altitude aircraft have been widely used in various scenarios in China, including for performance, agriculture, logistics, medical and for emergency search and rescue.



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