



From left: The zero-kilometer sign in Laoniawan village in Pianguan county is the start of the Great Wall No 1 sightseeing road. GAO YONGSHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY The Taihang No 1 road will stretch more than 1,200 km from Xinzhou in the north to Jincheng in the south. MA XIAOTIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Digging deep to upgrade mining

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A coal-rich province is the label many people in China give Shanxi and their impressions of the coal-mining industry always include long and deep underground shafts where workers labor away in darkness.

However, such preconceptions would be shattered if one had visited a recent industrial show in Shanxi.

The 2020 Taiyuan Expo for Coal Mining Technologies and Equipment was held from Sept 15-17 in Taiyuan. Nearly 700 enterprises from China and abroad exhibited their latest products and technologies.

This year's expo is the largest event in terms of scale and participation in its 19-session history, according to Wang Shouzheng, secretary-general of the Shanxi Coal Industry Association, one of the organizers of the event.

Wang said the event is "a window to showcase China's coal industry to the world and an important venue for international industrial and technological cooperation".

At the expo, the most eye-catching exhibits were cutting-edge equipment and technologies that are being used to upgrade the industry.

Some included intelligent, automatic and digital technologies that could improve safety and efficiency. For instance, on display were robots and smart equipment that can perform unmanned mining, sparing miners from working in the deep and sometimes risky shafts.

Fenix Huayi Industry, a company based in Jinzhong, displayed its long-distance concrete pumping and injecting equipment. According to the company, it is an industry-leading device to increase efficiency and reduce labor forces in the process of reinforcing shafts.

A variety of automatic pneumatic machines exhibited by Shanxi-based Burui Lianta Coal Mining Machinery attracted the attention of many visitors.

"A prominent feature of the machines is that they are all driven by air, which is more efficient and safer than those powered by electricity," said Cui Xueyan, board chairman of the company.

"Coal-mine accidents are always accompanied with power failure. In this case, pneumatic machines can still work, helping workers respond to an emergency," Cui explained.

There was also a pneumatic machine for extracting hazardous gas in the shafts. Cui said the machine is connected to in-shaft monitoring devices and can work automatically if the content of hazardous gas increases.

"We secured orders for the machines from more than 100 buyers at the expo," Cui said. He added that the company will produce more smart and automatic equipment to meet the demand of coal industry upgrades.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Trio of sightseeing roads lead to treasures in Shanxi



Tourists to be given easier access to Great Wall, Yellow River and Taihang Mountains

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Luo Yangsheng, Party secretary of Shanxi, announced on Sept 23 the launch of zero-kilometer signs for three major sightseeing highways in the province, further highlighting the importance of three top local destinations of the Yellow River, the Great Wall and the Taihang Mountains.

The three 0-km signs are located at Qiankun Bay in Yonghe county by the Yellow River, Laoniawan at the intersection of the Great Wall and the Yellow River and Wangmangling at the heart of Taihang Mountains. The three sites are among the landmark attractions in Shanxi province.

Shanxi began construction on the three sightseeing highways, ending or beginning at these signs — which are called Yellow River No 1, Great Wall No 1 and Taihang No 1 roads — in 2018. With a combined investment of 59.8 billion yuan (\$8.76 billion), the highways will cover a total length of 6,143 kilometers and will be completed in five years.

Three tourist service centers have been built surrounding the 0-km signs, combining such facilities as caravan parks, campsites, viewing areas, galleries and museums.

According to the provincial transport authorities, a total of 4,250 km highways of the three routes are either under construction or had been completed as of this month. The highways will connect more than 170 tourist destinations in Shanxi.

At the launch ceremony of the 0-km signs, Party secretary Lou said: "As Shanxi is one of the cradles of the Chinese civilization and boasts a great number of cultural heritage sites, a tour of Shanxi is a great opportunity to study the long history of China."

He noted that, with rich tourism resources in terms of both culture and nature, the Yellow River, the Great Wall and the Taihang Moun-

tain are the top three representatives of all the attractions in Shanxi.

The Yellow River, for instance, is the mother river of China as it has nurtured the culture and economy of the nation for thousands of years.

As the Yellow River flows about 3,500 kilometers from its source in Qinghai province through Togtoh county in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, it enters Shanxi province in the village of Laoniawan in Pianguan county.

From Laoniawan, which means "old ox bay", the Yellow River has left its most gorgeous feature, the Shanxi-Shaanxi Grand Gorge, which serves as the border of the two provinces.

For millennia, Shanxi's residents along the river have used its water to irrigate their farmlands. However, the river sometimes destroyed their land and properties and even took their lives when severe flooding happened.

Historical documents said the river was sometimes praised as the hope and glory of Shanxi as well as the nation, and sometimes cursed when it brought disaster and despair.

The Great Wall has brought similar feelings to the Chinese people. In times of peace, the Great Wall

passes were the venues of exchange between the Han people and the nomads in the north. When wars took place, high hopes were pinned on the wall in defense against invaders. And if the wall was overcome by the enemies, it was always disastrous to the nation.

Shanxi is home a number of strategic strongholds of the walls, where storied events relating to war and peace, trade and cultural exchanges happened frequently.

With a total length of more than 3,500 km in Shanxi, the Great Wall runs through nine cities and about 40 counties. More than 1,500 km of walls and other relics remain relatively intact.

Extending more than 400 km from north to south, the Taihang Mountains are one of the largest mountain ranges in North China and is where the name of Shanxi province comes from.

Shanxi — which means "to the west of the mountains" — is so called because it is located to the west of Taihang.

One of the most imposing sights in the mountains are the cliffs rising perpendicularly from the valleys. The cliffs are often called the "iron walls of Taihang".

Jincheng tailoring tourism routes to cater more to older generation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Catering to the demand of an aging society, tourism operators in Jincheng in the southeast of Shanxi province have recently developed recreational tours for seniors, with many tailor-made facilities and services emerging in the rural and urban areas in the city.

In Xingze village in the city's Qinshui county, an elderly recreational project called "Mountainside Habitat for Seclusive Dragons" immediately became a favorite destination among elderly tourists from Jincheng and the rest of the province after it launched in August.

Gao Junfei, boss of a local lodging business, said all of the 30-plus rooms of his lodge had been booked by tourists for the eight-day National Day and Middle Autumn Festival holiday starting from Oct 1.

"Actually, the occupancy rate of my lodge has been very high since August," Gao added.

The village is at the heart of the



A recreational tourism project is under construction in Wuwangshan village in Jincheng city. NING SHAOXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Taihang Mountains, and has good air quality featuring a high content of negative oxygen ions, and attractive scenery featuring green mountains and clear waters, said Guo Gaixin, an official in the village.

Gao added the lodges in the village were designed in the traditional style of old residences but rooms are equipped with modern facilities.

"The convenience brought by the well-equipped lodges is further

enhanced by the easier transport as the village is better connected with newly built Taihang No 1 sightseeing highway in its vicinity," said Gao, adding that convenience is a major player in attracting elderly tourists.

Jincheng is a pilot city in Shanxi for developing an integrated tourism industry that combines agricultural and ecological tours, culture, sightseeing and recreation for the elderly, according to the city's officials.

Of its total population of 2.35 million, 380,000 people, or 16 percent, are aged above 60.

To meet the demand of the older adults, Jincheng has developed a number of elderly care and recreational facilities throughout the city.

In the city's Zezhou county, several residential communities have been built for seniors.

The city's Yuyuan Elders' Home is a community with four apartment buildings, a hospital and other elderly care facilities.

"In the community, we are served by a team of professionals including doctors. And nearby parks offer us good venues for relaxing," said Liang Wenying, a resident in the community.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

Loyal warrior still admired to this day



An opera performer plays Guan Gong during a cultural festival at the Xiezhou Temple of Emperor Guan. HU XUGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

The worship of the ancient general Guan Yu is so prevalent throughout the country that a Chinese saying goes: "Every village has a temple of Guan Gong."

Guan Gong is a reverent term of address for Guan Yu, a general in the period spanning the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) and the Three Kingdoms (220-280).

Guan was one of the most prominent generals of his time serving under the warlord Liu Bei. He played a significant role in the civil war that led to the collapse of the Han Dynasty and the establishment of the state of Shu Han, of which Liu was the first emperor.

Liu Bei was said to be a descendant of the Han royal family and his state of Shu Han was regarded as a legitimate extension of the previous

dynasty. This confirmed Guan as a warrior for a righteous course and distinguished him from other generals in the same period.

Known for his exceptional valor and loyalty, he was deified as Guandi or Emperor Guan. Regarded as a sage for his military achievement, the status of Guan was elevated to that of Confucius, who is deemed as a sage of culture and education, in later dynasties.

This elevation led to a nationwide worship of Guan, and his many virtues have been praised.

However, residents in today's Shanxi province, especially in Guan's hometown Yuncheng, are among the most fervent believers.

The city has held 31 sessions of Guan Gong Culture Festival, attracting people throughout the nation to pay homage.

During the 31st festival, which

opened on Sept 22, local officials regarded Guan's spirit of valor and loyalty as relevant to the great revitalization of the Chinese nation.

As the values relating to Guan are shared by people throughout the nation, either in the mainland or in Taiwan across the Straits, the belief in Guan Gong can be a cohesive force for national unity, local officials said.

The influence of Guan has also reached more than 100 countries and regions with immigration of Chinese people over the centuries. Temples of Guan have been built overseas. And a statue of Guan can often be found in shops and restaurants owned by overseas Chinese, with burning candles and incense surrounded with fruit as offerings.

Among the countless temples of Guan Gong across China, the one in Xiezhou county in Yuncheng, where Guan Yu was born, is the most typical, the largest, best preserved and most skilfully constructed.

The Xiezhou Temple of Emperor Guan was listed as a key national cultural relic protection unit in 1988 and rated as a national 4A-class scenic spot in 2005.

The Temple of Emperor Guan, or

the ancestral temple, is part of a huge scenic resort, which also includes the ancestral hall and his ancestral grave.

Li Yali contributed to this story.



The Xiezhou Temple of Emperor Guan is the largest temple for Guan Gong in China. LI CHENGJIN / FOR CHINA DAILY