

A century on, the CPC story still resonates



Shanxi province relishes its role in heroic Red Army's historic Long March

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Studying the history of the Communist Party of China can remind officials and Party members of their missions, promote patriotism, increase coherence among citizens and inspire people to innovate, according to Party members and residents in North China's Shanxi province.

As this year marks the 100th anniversary of the founding of the CPC, Shanxi province has recently implemented a campaign to study and learn from the Party's history.

Since the beginning of this year, enthusiasm for studying CPC history has been increasing in governmental institutions, enterprises, schools and communities.

In late February and early March, special lectures and seminars featuring the Party's history were held in Shanxi's 85 higher-learning institutions and 7,807 primary and middle schools, marking



From Left: Party members in Linfen city attend a training session for the study of CPC history. LI HUWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY A teacher in a primary school in Jishan county shows students a model of a boat that hosted a key Party meeting. LI LUJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

the first lesson of their new semester.

In Taiyuan Normal University, for instance, the natural landscapes, local produce and folk traditions along the routes of the Long March (1934-36), have been newly included in lessons for students majoring in geography.

With a journey covering more than 10,000 kilometers, the Long March is the historic trek of the CPC-led Red Army, which resulted in the relocation of the Communist revolutionary base from the southeastern to the northern part of China, enabling the Red Army to fight the Japanese invaders on the front line.

"Throughout their journey, the communist troops overcame many difficulties, including crossing snow-covered mountains and torrential rivers, to reach the northwestern province of Shaanxi," a teacher at Taiyuan Normal University said.

"The heroism attributed to the Long March inspired many young Chinese to join the CPC during the late 1930s and early 1940s and will continue to inspire our contemporaries to make new achievements in the development of a modern China."

Soon after the Red Army arrived in Shaanxi, it reached neighboring Shanxi, a province that was closer to



regions occupied by the Japanese aggressors.

After the nationwide War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression broke out on July 7, 1937, Shanxi became the most important base for the CPC-led Eighth Route Army to fight the Japanese invaders.

The Taihang Mountains in the east of Shanxi witnessed many battles between the Eighth Route Army and the Japanese aggressors.

Today's Taihang is a major attraction among tourists because of many imposing sights including the cliffs rising perpendicularly from the valleys, which are often called the "iron walls of Taihang."

In the eyes of locals, the term

"iron walls of Taihang" is not only a description of the landscape, but also a tribute to the heroes who protected the nation by pledging to "build a new Great Wall with their very flesh and blood."

General Zuo Quan (1905-42), deputy chief of staff of the army, honored the promise by sacrificing his life during a battle in the county of Liaoxian in 1942.

To pay homage to this great hero, the local people changed the name of the county to Zuoquan in the year of his death.

"More than seven decades ago, heroes like Zuo Quan devoted their lives to protecting the peace of our nation and safeguarding the well-

being of our people," a local official said. "And today we still cherish the values as the most precious spiritual wealth."

The official said the local government and the Party committee of Zuoquan have put improving people's livelihoods high on their agendas.

"Our officials have paid frequent visits to the veteran soldiers and families of martyrs to address their concerns," the official said. "There are also special services offered to elderly people and free legal services and training for the laborers."

Pingxingguan in Lingqiu county is the site where the Eighth Route Army won its first decisive victory against the Japanese in September 1937.

The officials in Lingqiu take the same attitude in learning from the Party's history and cherish the same people-centered values as the officials in Zuoquan do.

"Improving the quality of life for our people, especially those in the rural areas, is a priority of our missions," an official from the Lingqiu county government said.

According to the official, the county government has invested heavily in projects improving the living environment for rural residents. These projects include garbage sorting and disposal facilities in 82 villages, 40 rural wastewater treatment plants and 48 rural public bathrooms.

Guo Yanjie contributed to this story.

'Nanny' services helping modernize small-scale farms in Yicheng county

By YUAN SHENGGAO

April used to be among the busiest farming periods in Shanxi province as the wheat and other crops are about to put forth ears and farmers have to water and fertilize their plantations.

But farmers in the village of Futu in Yicheng county are being freed from strenuous manual labor thanks to the use of farming machines and services provided by local cooperatives.

While a farm owner stood watching, technicians from local farming company Xinxiangfeng Agricultural Technology used remote controls to guide four drones in spraying fertilizer over crops measuring about 2 hectares.

The job was done in about 15 minutes and the technicians quickly moved to another wheat farm for the same task.

Li Xuefeng, head of the company, was also on-site to study the effect and efficiency of drone spraying.

"This is the first time we've used drones to spray fertilizer on farms and the effect meets our expectation," Li said.

"It takes an entire day for a farmer to spray fertilizer on less than 1 hectare of land," Li said. "The use of drones can increase the efficiency by 20-30 times and fertilizers can be applied to crops more evenly."



Technicians guide drones in spraying fertilizer on a wheat farm in Yicheng county. HU BO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Xinxiangfeng is an entity that integrates a number of rural cooperatives in Yicheng county. It leases farming machines to farmers and offers comprehensive services ranging from plowing, sowing, irrigation, crop care and harvesting to grain storage and sales.

"The services of the cooperatives can be bought at very competitive prices and their work efficiency is much higher than individual farmers," said Han Jiafa, a farmer in Beijing village in Yicheng. "We can entrust all the farming work to the cooperatives and find jobs other than farming to increase our revenues."

To date, there are 24 cooperatives

in Yicheng that offer full-range farming services. As these cooperatives have been commissioned by farmers to take care of all the farming processes on their lands, they are usually called "farming nannies" by locals.

The farming nanny practice is commonplace in the rest of Shanxi province.

Wang Haisheng is a farmer in Shengli village, Shouyang county. He began to entrust his 1.3-hectare farm to a local farming nanny cooperative in 2019.

"Other farmers have used the farming nanny services for several years," Wang said. "I adopted a wait-and-see

attitude until I was convinced by my fellow villagers who had greatly benefited from such services."

One year later, he said he earned about 20,000 yuan (\$3,084) in net income from his farm.

"The revenue is much higher than what you earn by laboring yourself throughout the year," Wang said. "And you are no longer worried about the weather, the pests and sales of grains."

Wang now works as an immigrant worker in East China's Jiangsu province, earning an annual salary almost twice the revenue of his farm.

Agricultural officials in Shouyang said that about 50,000 hectares of farms in the county have been entrusted to local farming nanny cooperatives.

In Shanxi province as a whole, there are a total of 32,000 similar farming nanny cooperatives across 94 counties and districts. They take care of 1.32 million hectares of farms for more than 1 million households, according to Liu Zhijie, chief of the Shanxi Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

"Such cooperatives can play a crucial role in promoting agricultural modernization in Shanxi," Liu said.

In Shanxi, the small scale of farming operations used to be a major bottleneck that hindered agricultural modernization. It was impossible for individual farmers to equip themselves with a full range of farming machines, Liu explained. "The farming nanny cooperatives now offer an effective solution to this problem."

Li Shu contributed to this story.

Local 'Forbidden City' leaves an impression

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A visit to the Grand Courtyard of the Wang Family in Lingshi county in central Shanxi is an experience that makes people believe it's no exaggeration to call this renowned attraction the "Forbidden City in Shanxi".

Located in the town of Jingsheng, the grand courtyard is only 35 kilometers to the southwest of the ancient city of Pingyao and 150 km from the Shanxi provincial capital of Taiyuan.

It was built by the Wang family during Emperor Kangxi's reign (1661-1722) and Emperor Jiaqing's reign (1796-1820) in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The site features the typical architectural style of the Qing Dynasty.

The huge residential complex covers 250,000 square meters and consists of five alleys, five castles, five ancestral halls, 123 small courtyards and 2,078 rooms. The number of rooms and courtyards is so big that no other civilian residence in China can match them.

Another similarity it shares with the Forbidden City is the layout of the yards shows the strict hierarchical system of ancient China. Rooms and yards with different scales were offered to people in accordance with their social status.

And the entire complex is protected by a long and tall city wall like that of the Forbidden City.

The residential complex is the glory of the Wang family, which has been ranked among the top four prestigious families in Lingshi, and the brilliant history of the renowned Jinshang merchants.

Shanxi is known for its historical commerce that was developed by the local merchants, or Jinshang. It is said that Jinshang merchants dominated commercial circles in North China for about 500 years starting from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

Many of these successful mer-

chants began as small vendors and made a fortune through hard work over generations.

The family history book shows that the Wang family has been in Lingshi for more than 700 years. Like many Jinshang merchants, the early ancestors began their business by selling bean curd and later made a fortune that lasted for several centuries.

After their success in business, the family's members began to enter the political circle in the early Qing Dynasty, with more than 40 family members serving as officials in the imperial court. The combination of business and politics further added to the prosperity of the family, so the members launched massive construction projects and built their own mansions for about 200 years.

Because the residential complex is so large, there are too many things for visitors to explore.

To make a tour both efficient and impressive, the three sites — the Shilyu Castle, the Red Gate Castle and the Gaojiaya Building Complex — are the most extraordinary highlights for visitors.

There are rich and exquisite carvings on the walls, in themes including flowers, birds, animals fish, insects and storied tales. The carvings are wide in variety and superb in skill. A lot of excellent artists, craftsmen and painters of the times worked together to accomplish such grand works. Family instructions, as well as the teachings of Confucius, the Buddha and Taoism, were inscribed alongside the carvings.

With its increasing popularity among tourists, the Grand Courtyard of the Wang Family has received more than 2 million annual visits in recent years, according to Yin Xiongzuo, an executive at this scenic area.

Peng Ke'er contributed to this story.

Huge incentives for entrepreneurs to launch startups

By YUAN SHENGGAO

After graduating from Datong University in Shanxi province, Zhang Jiaming, a native of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, decided to start his own business in the city of Datong.

Zhang and his four friends started a small company called Geeker Space Technology last year, designing and developing circuit products for larger companies.

Zhang decided to stay in Datong because of the incentives for entrepreneurship offered by the city. He and his friends' apartments and offices are provided for free.

Datong is not alone in offering incentives for entrepreneurship.

In a residential community of the Shanxi Transformation and Comprehensive Reform Demonstration Zone in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, a total of 626 apartments have been offered to entrepreneurs who started businesses in the zone.

In recent years, Shanxi prioritized attracting talented, innovative professionals to transform its economy. It highlights a shift from the prov-



A residential community has been developed in Taiyuan to offer housing to young entrepreneurs. WU JIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

ince's reliance on the coal industry to an economic diversification featuring multiple growth drivers, especially the emerging, high-tech industries.

The incentives for entrepreneurship offered by various levels of governments in Shanxi include tax exemptions, free housing or housing subsidies, assistance in access to loans and subsidies for entrepreneur-

ship, as well as awards to outstanding entrepreneurs.

In Datong, the city has established a special entrepreneurship base called Huizhi Innovation Town. It is for young professionals like Zhang to incubate and start their businesses.

Since its establishment in August 2020, Huizhi Innovation Town has attracted more than 1,000 young pro-

fessionals to start their companies.

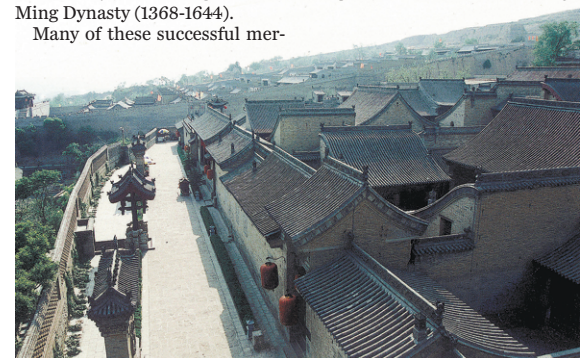
They are all provided with free housing, according to officials in Datong. There is still plenty of room for newcomers in the years to come. There are 58 apartment buildings offering free housing to entrepreneurs, as well as office buildings offering studios for free.

"We have planned to build more such facilities for young professionals, making Huizhi Innovation Town and the whole of Datong a favored destination for entrepreneurship and innovation," said Yang Hefen, an official in Datong's employment and human resource service center.

When commenting on Datong's incentives for entrepreneurs, the city's Mayor Wu Hongwen cited a Chinese proverb. He said: "We are planting parasol trees to attract phoenixes."

In Chinese legend, parasol trees are the favored habitat of phoenixes. In his quotation, the mayor expressed he expects to create a favorable business and living environment for entrepreneurs and professionals alike.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.



As the largest ancient civilian residence complex in China, the Grand Courtyard of the Wang Family in Lingshi county is called by many the "Forbidden City in Shanxi". PENG KE'ER / FOR CHINA DAILY