

Shanxi gains investment by reaching out

Provincial delegations visited cities' officials and diplomats ahead of Expo Central China



By YUAN SHENGGAO

Ahead of the 12th Expo Central China on May 21 in Taiyuan, the Shanxi Investment Promotion Bureau dispatched delegations to provinces, cities and foreign diplomatic missions in China to invite potential participants and partners. Expo Central China is a major investment and trade event held every two years in one of the six provinces in Central China: Shanxi, Anhui, Jiangxi, Henan, Hubei and Hunan.

Shanxi's capital city, Taiyuan, hosted the sixth event in September 2011.

In April, Yang Chunquan, chief of the SIPB, headed a delegation to Shanghai.

There, while introducing Shanxi's major investment opportunities, the official said Shanxi expects to learn from Shanghai in hosting international investment and trade shows, such as the China International Import Expo.

Another Shanxi delegation held talks with officials of the Hainan International Economic Development Bureau. Delegates said they want to learn from Hainan's experience in opening-up, especially its initiatives in developing an interna-

tional free port economy and an international tourism destination.

On April 16, Yang led a delegation to visit the embassy of the Philippines in Beijing. He introduced Shanxi's 14 strategic emerging industries, 10 industrial clusters in agriculture and Shanxi's major tourist attractions along the Yellow River — the Great Wall and the Taihang Mountains — to the embassy's commercial and agricultural officials.

The Philippine officials said they are satisfied with the trade and investment status in Shanxi and expect to enhance cooperation in the fields of agricultural product trade, information technology, new energy vehicles and healthcare.

The following day, the Shanxi delegation visited the Singaporean embassy in Beijing. Yang told officials there that Shanxi is implementing an economic upgrade. It is transforming from its reliance on coal-mining and cultivating emerging and high-tech industries, which is driving high-quality development.

The official said the transformation offers huge opportunities to Singaporean investors because their technologies and capital are sought-after in Shanxi. Also, Shanxi's easy access to huge markets in the northern, central and northwestern parts of China can bring benefits to investors.

As a result of the promotional efforts by local officials, more business representatives from home and



Yang Chunquan, chief of the Shanxi Investment Promotion Bureau, meets with Glenn Penaranda, commercial counselor at the Philippine embassy in Beijing on April 16. WANG PEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

abroad have visited Shanxi to seek cooperative opportunities.

On April 19, for instance, Huang Yaohe, a Chinese partner of PricewaterhouseCoopers, visited Shanxi on behalf of the company. During his talks with officials at the SIPB, Huang said PwC wants to cooperate with businesses in the province.

Shanxi's officials see trade shows at home and abroad as major channels for investment and trade promotion.

In 2020, major trade shows that Shanxi's business delegations took part in included a business match-making fair held in Beijing in January. It consisted of enterprises from Shanxi, Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei. There, Shanxi's companies signed agreements for 27 investment projects with an agreed investment value totaling 91.3 billion yuan (\$14.1 million).

Shanxi also sent a business delegation to attend the Smart Energy Japan show held in Tokyo in December. At this famed new energy show, Shanxi's companies displayed the latest developments in sectors including hydrogen energy and automotive fuel cells. Intentions for cooperation were reached between Shanxi and Japanese companies.

The province hosted the 2020 China (Taiyuan) International Energy Industry Expo back in October. A total of 137 overseas businesses from more than 40 countries and regions and 257 domestic companies displayed their technologies and solutions.

According to the SIPB, Shanxi's companies signed agreements on 3,124 investment projects in 2020, attracting 1.97 trillion yuan in total pledged investment. The amount represented a 64 percent increase from the planned investment value of 1.2 trillion yuan for that year.

More than 2,600 investment projects began construction last year, with a total planned investment of 760 billion yuan. These included 2,546 projects that were agreed in 2020.

To make Shanxi's investment opportunities better known to domestic and foreign investors, the SIPB recently issued a "road map for guiding investment in its 14 strategic emerging industries". It includes information on 300 major investment projects and related projects in the industrial chains of 14 industries.

Wang Shuang contributed to this story.

Biomedicine sector showing potential for growth

By YUAN SHENGGAO

As one of the 14 strategic emerging industries in Shanxi province, the biomedicine sector is showing great potential for growth thanks to improved innovation capabilities among local players.

Among many new medicine releases into the market, the recombinant human-origin collagen III developed by Taiyuan-based Jinbo Biology is among the most remarkable because of its globally advanced level.

Yang Xia, founder and board chairwoman of Jinbo Biology, said the company is the only enterprise in the world that mass produces the medicine. Its volume production began in January.

"Unlike other industries, the research and development of new medicines needs more time — at least 10 years," Yang said. "This requires a company to consistently invest in R&D and continuously improve its innovative strength."

However, even with huge amounts of investment and a time-consuming process, the success rate of new medicine development is only about 10 percent, Yang said.

"In the R&D of recombinant human-origin collagen III, we made our breakthrough in the lab after



Yang Xia, founder and chairwoman of Jinbo Biology, shows models of recombinant human-origin collagen to staff members during a company training session. WU LIUHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

numerous failures over more than 1,000 days," Yang said. "It takes a couple of years to commercialize the lab results and another couple of years to realize mass production."

For the commercialization of the new medicine, Jinbo Biology has invested about 250 million yuan (\$38.6 million) in building a technology transfer center.

"With this center in place, we can develop medicine varieties that can be applied to different scenarios ranging from surgery, gynecology and dermatology to skin

care cosmetics," Yang explained.

Despite the huge investment and uncertainties in the long R&D period, Yang said she is still optimistic about the biomedicine industry in Shanxi because the market environment is friendly thanks to strong support from the government.

"Innovative industries like biomedicine are prioritized in China and the State has recently issued a number of preferential policies for them," said Ma Jingbo, an official at the Shanxi Department of Industry and Information Technology.

He noted that Shanxi has offered further incentives for such industries.

For instance, the Shanxi Department of Industry and Information Technology has set aside a special fund to award companies with strong investment in R&D.

"Companies with more than 20 percent growth in annual R&D investment are eligible for awards from the fund," Ma explained, adding that biomedicine companies with constant growth in R&D investment are the major beneficiaries of such a policy.

Other supportive measures from the local government include promoting collaborations between enterprises and research institutions, encouraging the sharing of public R&D facilities and labs, protecting intellectual property rights, and helping enterprises recruit and foster R&D professionals.

"The protection of IPR is of great significance for high-tech companies like Jinbo Biology," Yang said.

Jinbo Biology is the holder of 23 invention patents, including two international patents. The company has been recognized as a State-level high-tech enterprise for four consecutive years, according to Yang.

Wang Pei contributed to this story.

Rural tourism changing lives in several counties

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With nearby mountains and valleys turned into scenic areas, ordinary farmhouses converted into lodges and orchards welcoming city dwellers to pick fruits, Huguang county in Shanxi province is using rural tourism to improve the lives of local villagers.

Li Xiuhong, a resident in the village of Lingdong in Huguang county, said she didn't realize the industry could bring such a significant change to her life and the lives of her fellow villagers.

Li used to be an impoverished farmer in the village that lies at the heart of the Taihang Mountains.

"Life was hard as we used to rely on farming on small pieces of land scattered in the rock-filled valleys," Li said. "The soil was so thin and infertile that we could hardly make ends meet even though we labored in the fields throughout the year."

The village is surrounded by mountains on all sides and connectivity to the road network was poor, making it difficult for people to travel to its neighboring areas and regions beyond, Li said.

Everything changed when the Phoenix Mountain Resort began operating in 2017.

The resort is a rural tourism cooperative launched by a tourism company in Huguang county. Villagers in Lingdong, after being relocated to a new settlement in the vicinity, became shareholders in the cooperative by contributing the former farmhouses, farmlands, orchards and other properties to the cooperative as their shares.

The resort includes lodges converted from renovated farmhouses and cave houses, hot springs, orchards, animal farms and an amusement park featuring hot-air balloons, horse-racing and other facilities. It provides more than 140 jobs to locals as well as dividends each year.

Li now works in one of the kitchens at the resort, and can earn a monthly salary of 3,000 yuan (\$463).

"Almost one-third of residents in Lingdong now work at the resort," Li said.

The village of Lingdong is only one example of how tourism is used to alleviate poverty and improve people's livelihoods in rural Shanxi.

Zuoquan, another county in the Taihang Mountains, is using its cliff-surrounded valleys, high peaks, dense forests and local folk traditions as major tourist draws.

The county's farmers have developed a tradition of singing folk songs and holding folk song

contests for hundreds of years.

"A tour of Zuoquan is always accompanied with folk songs. Sometimes the songs you hear are so familiar that you can't help but sing along," said a tourist from the provincial capital of Taiyuan. "The folk songs can make a trip extremely impressive and relaxing."

Realizing that the folk songs are a unique resource for cultural tourism, Zuoquan's tourism authorities launched the Zuoquan Folk Song Gala in 2019. The gala has since grown into an annual event, attracting folk song singers from across the country and involving the wide participation of locals and tourists alike.

As the folk song gala wins increasing popularity across the nation, its major sightseeing attractions, which are collectively known as the "50-kilometer natural gallery", are also gaining recognition among tourists in China.

The Zuoquan section of the Taihang No 1 Highway, which became operational in 2019, has also given a strong boost to the county's rural tourism industry.

Taihang No 1 is a major sightseeing road linking many tourism attractions in the Taihang Mountains. In Zuoquan, more than 280 scenic areas are connected by the road, which makes travel much easier than before.

According to the county's culture and tourism bureau, a total of 846 households in the rural areas have opened bed-and-breakfast businesses, helping more than 2,500 people overcome poverty through lucrative jobs.

Another example of poverty reduction through tourism is Wangjiazhuang village in Pingshun county.

The village's unique selling point is its centuries-old farmhouses and ancient streets.

But locals didn't realize this several years ago.

"We couldn't understand why tourists liked to see such old, shabby houses that even we were bored with," said Yue Xingwang, a local villager.

But local tourism insiders recognized this advantage. Starting in 2016, companies began investing in tourism businesses by renovating old houses, opening lodges and developing sightseeing orchards.

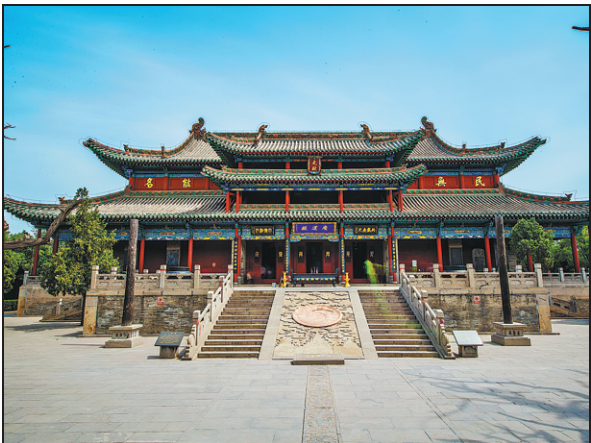
Wangjiazhuang now receives hundreds of tourists every day and the tourism industry has provided more than 300 jobs to local residents.

Zhang Ting contributed to this story.



The newly built Taihang No 1 sightseeing road connects more than 280 tourist attractions throughout Zuoquan county. XING LANFU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Temple of Yao a place to worship great emperor



The Temple of Yao in Linfen is the major site for ceremonies to pay tribute to the ancient Chinese leader. PENG KE'ER / FOR CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Emperor Yao, a leader of China some 4,000 years ago, is regarded as one of the common ancestors of the Chinese people alongside such figures as the Yellow Emperor and the Red Emperor.

Ceremonies to pay tribute to Emperor Yao have lasted millennia. The city of Linfen in Shanxi province is the major site for such ceremonies because it is regarded as the capital of the nation ruled by him.

The *Bamboo Annals*, a history book compiled more than 2,300 years ago, said Emperor Yao made Pingyang the capital after he was selected as the head of the country. Pingyang is the ancient name of Linfen.

In the south of Linfen, the Temple of Yao has been the site to remember

and pay homage to him since it was built in the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316).

The majority of the structures, including halls and pavilions, were rebuilt in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

But a number of trees, including cypress and pagoda trees, were planted more than 1,600 years ago, according to Qi Jing, a tour guide at the temple.

Qi, in her 30s, said she is proud of the many cultural and spiritual legacies left by Emperor Yao and those associated with Linfen.

"China's first poem, *The Song of Digging Well*, is said to have been created in Linfen during the reign of Emperor Yao," Qi said.

The poem, consisting of only five lines, goes like this:

"The sun rises and I work,

The sun sets and I rest.
I dig a well to drink water,
And plant crops for my meals
The king's power is none of my business."

Qi said the poem reflects the political system of the country some 4,000 years ago, which was in a status of primitive democracy.

"At that time, Yao was not the hereditary monarch of the country. He and his predecessors and successors were all selected by the country's senators," Qi said.

The tour guide said wells were also of great significance in ancient times as they provided people with safe drinking water. "In Chinese, a well is an equivalent to homeland as human settlements like villages, towns and cities were all developed surrounding wells. And that's why people usually say 'leaving their old wells' when they depart with their homeland."

In the Temple of Yao, there is a well which is said to have been dug

by Emperor Yao. With a proven history of more than 1,600 years, it is called "the First Well Under Heaven". Its water is still drinkable.

In front of the well is a structure called the "Five-Phoenix Building".

"The five phoenixes refer to Yao and the four senators of his age, who were the major decision-makers of the nation," Qi said. She went on to say that this was also part of the ancient democracy.

Since the Qing Dynasty, a grand ceremony has been held on the 28th day of the fourth lunar month to pay homage to Emperor Yao.

"But for daily visitors to the temple, their worship to Yao can be practiced the moment they arrive," Qi said.

Visitors can rent ancient costumes on-site and attend a small-scale worshipping ceremony in front of the statue of Emperor Yao in the hall of sacrifice.

Peng Ke'er contributed to this story.