



The Xiaodian district administrative service center in Taiyuan features a section providing intelligent services.  
WANG PEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Shanxi ramps up drive to build better business environment

Raft of red-tape cutting, incentives for enterprises operating in province



By YUAN SHENGGAO

The government of North China's Shanxi province is going all out to attract investors by improving its business environment.

A recent effort by the government saw the release of a five-year plan on Nov 16 for developing the business environment.

This is the first five-year plan focused on the business environment in Shanxi, according to Lian Jianlin, deputy chief of the Shanxi Bureau of Administrative Services.

Lian made the remarks at a news conference held on the same day explaining the details of the five-year plan. The conference was attended by officials from the Shanxi Department of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction, the Shanxi Market Regulation Bureau, the Shanxi branch of the State Taxation Administration and the Shanxi Administrative Services Center, who all shared their insights into the new plan.

Lian said the plan will play an important role in investment promotion by creating an efficient, inclusive and fair environment for all business activities in the province.

The official noted that the plan focuses on making it easier to start a

business by promising streamlined approval procedures, reduced administrative service costs and whole-process assistance from officials.

"For investments in low-risk projects, a simplified approval procedure will be applied, which can normally be completed in 10 days and involves zero service costs," Lian said.

"With both in-person and online platforms for administrative services, applications for starting businesses can be submitted 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Business registration used to require approvals from a number of governmental institutions that were usually scattered across a city, according to Guo Xin'an, an official at the Shanxi Market Regulation Bureau.

Market regulation bureaus are the main administrative services providers that issue business licenses to startups. However, before they obtain the licenses, business owners needed to first obtain various certificates, including those for fire safety, sanitation and admissions for sales of drugs and medical equipment before they could apply for a business license to start operating.

The old practice meant that a business would spend several months applying for certificates before they could get a business license and get their business up and running.

But the situation has changed in recent years, Guo said.

"Now, businesses can put forward their registration applications to a

local administrative services center, where officials from different institutions sit under one roof to handle the applications for license and various certificates," Guo said. "They can begin their operations upon acquiring a license, while other certificates can be dealt with afterward."

The official added the number of certificates required has also been reduced as a result of "merging similar functions into one certificate."

"For instance, a drugstore needed to apply for certificates for medicine sales, medical equipment sales and health food sales in the past. Now it only needs one certificate for all of those things," the official explained.

In addition, the use of online systems has further improved the efficiency of business registration.

According to Guo, entrepreneurs in Shanxi can submit their business registration applications and materials needed through various provincial e-government platforms. "For most of the applicants, they can obtain their licenses in one day and begin their operations immediately," Guo said.

Because of this substantial improvement in efficiency, the number of newly registered businesses has kept a fast pace of growth.

Shanxi was home to more than 3 million market entities at the end of October, and has had an average monthly increase of 24,100 in recent years, according to Guo.

During the first three quarters of this year, he said a total of 379,700

businesses were added in Shanxi, representing an average daily increase of nearly 2,000.

Guo predicted there will be a boom in entrepreneurship in the years to come as a result of the improved business environment.

"We expect there will be a total of 4.5 million market entities in Shanxi by the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), compared with about 3 million at present," Guo said.

The taxation institutions in Shanxi are playing their part in improving the business environment by offering greater convenience and more incentives to enterprises.

The Shanxi branch of the State Taxation Administration launched an e-taxation platform in late August. A focus of the platform is to publicize all taxation incentive policies.

"It used to be a complicated procedure to check what kind of incentives we were eligible for," said Mao Zhiming, financial chief of Shanxi Coal Mining Machinery Manufacturing. "It was even more complicated to apply for a tax reduction or rebate."

Mao said today he only needs to log onto the home page of the e-taxation platform and enter the company's name, and he can be informed of the incentives immediately. "Once I put forward our online inquiry for a tax reduction or rebate, an official at the tax bureau will contact us and offer follow-up services quickly."

Li Shu contributed to this story.

# Civil aviation industry climbs to new heights

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi has evolved into a major general aviation industry hub in China, taking great strides since the release of a medium-term plan in September 2018 for the industry's development during the 2018-35 period.

Three months after the plan's release, Shanxi was approved by the Civil Aviation Administration of China as the second demonstration region for general aviation, next only to Chongqing.

The province's major player in the industry, Shanxi General Aviation Group, was founded in December 2018, and made its debut flight in April 2019.

Based at Yaocheng Airport in Taiyuan, the company now operates four short-distance routes, including the two flights linking Taiyuan with the Shanxi cities of Changzhi and Lyuliang on a daily and round-trip basis.

The company also operates three sight-seeing routes for tourists to destinations including the Hukou Waterfalls on the Yellow River, the Taihang Mountain Grand Canyons in eastern Shanxi and the Yanmen Pass of the Great Wall in the city of Xinzhou.

Shanxi has seven companies providing general aviation flight services. The plan's implementation has

increased the development of a full industrial chain in general aviation, including aircraft assembly, production and maintenance.

Xiyoyuan Aviation Technologies is an emerging aircraft maintenance company. Its clients include such international big names as Boeing and Airbus, according to Chen Jipeng, deputy general manager of the company.

Another heavyweight player in the general aviation manufacturing sector in Shanxi is a branch company funded and operated by Sino-German Light Aircraft based in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

The branch, called Datong Light Aircraft, was founded in 2017 in the northern Shanxi city of Datong. It was Shanxi's first company to be granted a license by the CAAC to manufacture aircraft.

With a designed annual production capacity of 400 light aircraft, Datong Light Aircraft secured orders of more than 100 units this year, according to Shen Dinglong, board chairman of Sino-German Light Aircraft.

According to Shanxi's plan for the industry, the scale of the province's general aviation sector is expected to reach 10 billion yuan (\$1.56 billion) by 2025. And the figure is projected to reach 50 billion yuan by 2035.

Wu Jia contributed to this story.



A paraglider air display is held at Yaocheng Airport in Taiyuan in September 2020. LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

# General Guan Gong revered in hometown of Haizhou for military valor

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Just as Confucius has been regarded as a sage of Chinese culture for more than 2,500 years, Guan Gong has been deemed a sage of military valor and enjoys a similar status among worshippers.

The worship of Guan is so prevalent throughout China that a saying goes: "Every village has a temple of Guan Gong."

Guan Gong is a reverential 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 Eastern Han Dynasty and the establishment of the state of Shu Han, of which Liu was the first emperor.

Liu 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 cause and distinguished him from other generals in that period.

Known for his exceptional valor and loyalty, he was deified as Guandi or Emperor Guan.

This elevation led to nationwide worship of Guan. The influence of Guan has also reached more than

100 countries and regions with the emigration of Chinese people over the centuries.

Temples of Guan have been built in China and overseas. A statue of Guan can often be found in residences, shops and restaurants owned by Chinese, with burning candles and incense surrounded with fruits as offerings.

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

Among the countless temples of Guan across China, the one in Haizhou is the most typical, the largest, best preserved and most skillfully constructed.

It is also the most famous among all Guan Gong temples. Surrounded by a huge wall, accessible by nine gates and consisting of a huge complex of ancient structures, the temple is comparable to an imperial palace complex like the Forbidden City in Beijing.

The largest building in this complex is the Hall of Spring and Autumn. The main statue in the hall is a sitting Guan Yu reading *Spring and Autumn*, a historical classic compiled by Confucius. It was said Guan drew much inspiration from Confucius' classics to cultivate his virtues of valor and loyalty.

Li Ningbo contributed to this story.



The Guandi Temple in Haizhou is the largest temple in China dedicated to the worship of Guan Yu. LI NINGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY

# Opening-up delivers new round of economic success

By YUAN SHENGGAO

With a full load of goods produced in Shanxi, a cargo train bound for Europe departed from the Zhongding Logistics Park in the provincial capital of Taiyuan on Sept 25.

It was the 500th train since the launch of the Sino-European freight train service in 2017.

Over the years, the freight trains from Shanxi have reached 27 cities across 12 countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

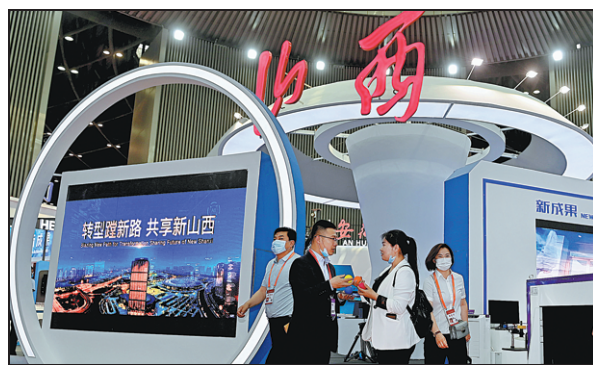
The booming cargo train business is a result of fast-growing foreign trade and investment in the province.

During 2016-19, Shanxi's foreign trade volume increased at an average annual rate of 9.3 percent, according to the Shanxi Department of Commerce.

In 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Shanxi's imports and exports of cargo amounted to 150 billion yuan (\$23.43 billion) for the first time, growing 4 percent year-on-year. That increase is 2.1 percentage points higher than the national average.

During the first eight months of this year, Shanxi ranked first in import increases and second in import growth nationally.

The department's statistics show that there were nearly 1,600 enterprises in Shanxi engaged in foreign trade in 2020. The province now has



Expo Central China is one of the trade events that Shanxi utilizes to promote its business links with the world. WANG RUIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

trade ties with 188 countries and regions across the world.

Machinery and electronics account for 70.86 percent of Shanxi's exports. High-tech industries, which include machinery, electronics and other products, take up 62.16 percent of the province's exports, according to the department.

The province has also witnessed a steady increase in foreign investment over the past few years.

During 2016-20, Shanxi's paid-in foreign investment totaled \$9.43 billion. Eighty-nine Fortune Global 500 companies have established operations in Shanxi.

From January to August this year, Shanxi saw the registration of 88 new foreign-funded enterprises, an increase of 66 percent year-on-year. The paid-in foreign direct investment amounted to \$230 million, growing 44.3 percent from the same period in 2020.

Shanxi has also witnessed a steady increase in outbound investment. During the first eight months of this year, Shanxi's enterprises made new investments worth \$208 million overseas, growing 62.59 percent year-on-year. The increased rate ranked the province fifth nationwide.

Shanxi's outbound investments

have reached more than 50 countries and regions, according to the provincial department of commerce.

The booming trade and investment reflects Shanxi's strategy to build itself into an opening-up highland in inland China.

The strategy involves a number of measures for trade facilitation and investment promotion, according to local officials.

One of the measures is to improve transport. In addition to developing the China-Europe freight train service, the province has boosted the construction and upgrade of airports.

The province now has five airports — in Taiyuan, Yuncheng, Changzhi, Datong and Wutaishan — to serve international trade and passenger flow with destinations across eight countries and three regions.

The province is also using a number of high-profile trade shows and international events to promote its business links with the world. These include Expo Central China and the Taiyuan Energy and Low-Carbon Development Forum.

Receiving 59 percent of Shanxi's inbound investment and accounting for 84.1 percent of its foreign trade, development zones and industrial parks are the leading platform of Shanxi's opening-up.

Wang Pei contributed to this story.