

International tour opens up opportunities for Shanxi's businesses

Province's enterprises explore mutually beneficial ties in cities of Birmingham, London and Barcelona



Agricultural modernization and the development of new energy resources, like solar and wind power, are among the many areas where businesses across Europe can find opportunities for cooperation with Shanxi. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanxi province recently showcased its investment and trade opportunities to the European business community with promotional events held in the United Kingdom and Spain.

The events, running from Oct 7-15, were part of a large promotional campaign called Shanxi Brands on the Silk Road, a move aiming to enhance trade and investment cooperation between Shanxi and the countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The events included exhibitions of products made in Shanxi, promotions of Shanxi's business opportunities and investment matchmaking activities.

Shanxi's trade officials and business representatives also held talks with their counterparts in Britain and Spain, trying to tap into trade and investment opportunities.

Two expos

The Shanxi delegation arrived in the UK on Oct 7.

On Oct 9, 29 companies from Shanxi, mostly manufacturers of activated carbon, filtering devices, pipes, valves and pumps, attended the Air Quality and Emissions and Water, Wastewater and Environmental Monitoring — which are known as AQE and WWEM — expos held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

The expos are the leading events in the UK for professionals addressing environmental challenges through solutions for water and air pollution monitoring and treatment.

The events featured cutting-edge technologies and strategies in net-zero emissions, resource management, the circular economy, water scarcity and management, biodiversity conservation and environmental emergency response.

Shanxi Carbon Industry was one of the eye-catching exhibitors at the expos.

"This time we are showing our activated carbon products made from coal, anthracite and charcoal, which can be widely used in the water treatment, air treatment and catalyst industries," said Qu Pengfei, sales manager of the company.

The executive said that Shanxi

Carbon's products have been sold to markets in Japan, South Korea, Africa and Europe, with a total annual export volume of about 40,000 metric tons.

"We are attending the Birmingham expos in a hope to further expand the market in Europe," Qu said.

He explained that the WWEM and AQE, which are held twice a year, are the largest expos in the UK for the resources management industry.

"Attending the expos definitely means a great opportunity for China's water treatment-related companies to make inroads into Europe, as well as the rest of the world," Peng said.

Jinfeng Casting, another company based in Shanxi's Taiyu county, was exhibiting its casting components at the expos with similar expectations.

"With our products, which are used in the heating, firefighting and water management industries, accounting for about 40 percent of domestic market share, we are one of the leading cast piping manufacturers in China," said Bai Weijie, general manager of the company.

"And now we are shifting our focus to the overseas market and I believe the WWEM and AQE expos can help us achieve this goal," he said. He added that this was the first time for the company to attend the Birmingham expos and he was amazed with the size and influence of the events.

David Hellyer, director of exhibition sales at ILM Exhibitions, one of the organizers of the events, paid a visit to the Shanxi exhibition zone.

He noted that this was the first time for Shanxi's companies to show up in the expos but the scale of their exhibition was large enough to attract attention from visitors, showing their ambition to expand in the UK and European markets.

He said that ILM will offer better services for Shanxi's businesses, helping them in realizing that ambition.

British capital

On Oct 10, the Shanxi delegation arrived in London, holding a trade and investment promotion event to boost multisector cooperation between Shanxi and the UK.

The event included activities to publicize Shanxi's business environ-



Attendees of the London promotion event listen to a Shanxi official's speech about the business opportunities in the Chinese province.

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ment, industrial policies and investment opportunities, and exhibit Shanxi's industries and products; as well as matchmaking meetings between Shanxi's and Britain's enterprises.

The delegation also paid a visit to the London-based China-Britain Business Council, the UK's national business network promoting trade and investment with China. The two sides held talks and agreed to enhance exchanges and cooperation and help enterprises to develop in each other's markets.

The UK is China's third-largest trading partner, its second-largest investment destination and third-largest investment source in Europe.

According to statistics released by the General Administration of Customs of China, trade in goods and services between China and the UK amounted to \$113 billion in 2023.

The service trade was a remarkable sector for bilateral trade in 2023, with the UK's service exports amounting to \$12.6 billion, accounting for one-third of its total exports.

During the London event, officials from two organizations in Shanxi's Yuncheng city — the Yuncheng Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the administrative committee of the Yuncheng Salt Lake High-Tech Industrial Development Zone — introduced their business environment and advantageous industries.

A provincial official from Shanxi also made a brief introduction to this North China province, includ-

ing its renowned tourism resources and industrial fundamentals.

When talking about the tourism industry, the official said that Shanxi has both rich cultural and natural resources to attract tourists.

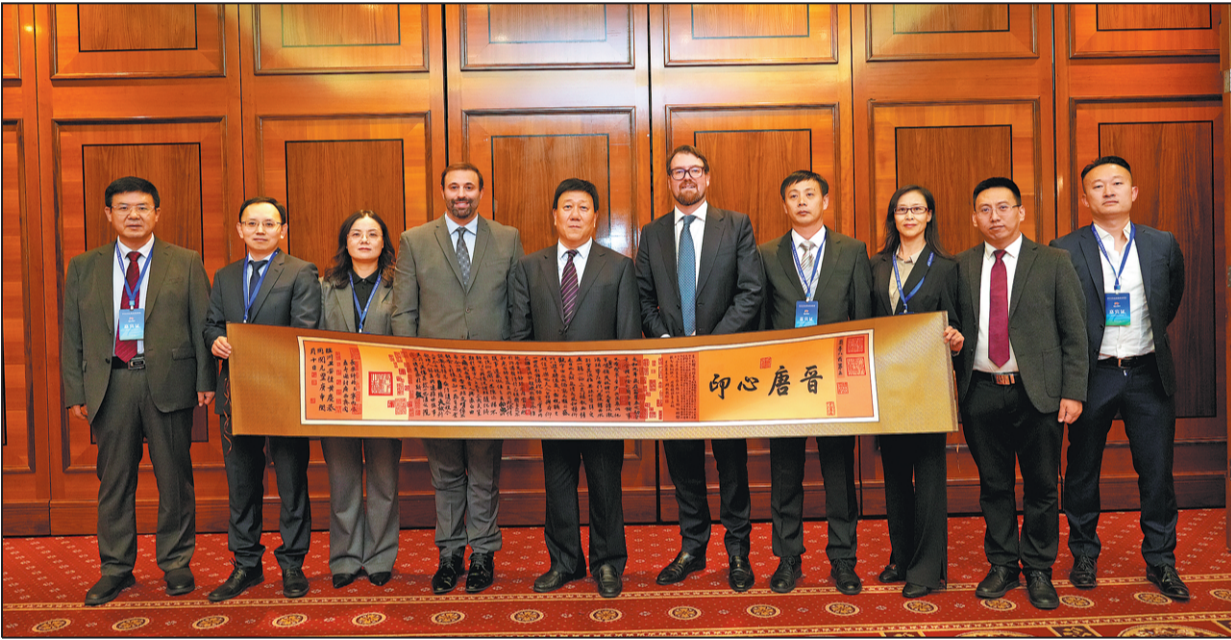
He said Shanxi is one of the cradles of Chinese civilization, with a history of more than 5,000 years. The long history has left a wealth of cultural legacy in the province, including the largest number of ancient buildings in China and a host of traditions still alive in people's daily lives, he said.

While preserving the best cultural legacies of ancient China, the official said Shanxi is also steadily pushing itself onto the track of modernization and opening-up to the world.

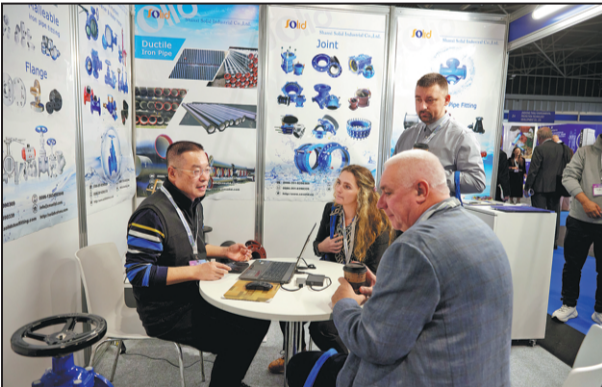
He noted that Shanxi has formed a modern industrial system with its traditional strengths in such heavy industries as coal mining, electricity, steelmaking, chemicals, construction materials and equipment manufacturing.

In recent years, Shanxi has implemented an industrial transformation that involves the upgrading of traditional heavy industries with modern, digital and intelligent technologies, as well as the cultivation of emerging sectors such as modern coal-based chemicals, advanced manufacturing, synthetic biology, new materials, environmental protection, finance and modern logistics.

The official also said that there is an energy revolution campaign in Shanxi, which is shifting its focus to



Shanxi's delegates present a scroll of calligraphy as a gift to British guests during the London event. LIU JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY



Left and right: Shanxi's business representatives introduce products and services to international visitors during the AQE & WWEM expos.

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developing new energy resources. This includes solar and wind power, coal-bed methane and hydrogen fuel.

He added that Shanxi is a traditional agricultural base in North China. In recent years, the province has been modernizing its agriculture, aiming to cultivate green,

organic and high-quality products with local characteristics, he said.

The official said these moves for industrial transformation and modernization can offer opportunities for investors and traders in Britain.

The official noted that Britain is the cradle of modern industrial civilization and it now has competitive

strengths in such sectors as biomedicines, electronics, optics, chemicals and aviation, as well as service sectors like finance, insurance, retail, tourism and ocean transportation. He said these are the sectors where Shanxi can draw experience from and cooperate with local businesses.

Jack Perry, chairman of the 48

Group Club, was present at the Shanxi promotion event.

The 48 Group Club, founded in 1954, is a Britain-based organization dedicated to promoting business, cultural and academic ties between China and the UK.

At the gathering, Perry said Shanxi has been known for its coal



Sergio Sanchez Famoso, head of Barcelona provincial bureau of commerce, talks with the media during Shanxi's promotion in Barcelona. LIU JIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

mining industry for decades and is now at the forefront of China's energy industry transformation.

With Shanxi's energy industry shifting its focus to growing new energy sources like hydrogen, wind and solar power, and developing technologies, equipment and solutions for cleaner, safer and more efficient coal production, the province is rapidly evolving into one of the advanced manufacturing hubs in China, Perry said. He added that this transformation is offering cooperation opportunities to British businesses.

He explained that while Shanxi can offer scenarios for cooperation in the clean and new energy, industrial equipment manufacturing and agricultural modernization sectors, British companies can supply their expertise in such fields as finance, services and research on energy efficiency. He said he expects British businesses to establish long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with their counterparts in Shanxi.

An official with the Shanxi Council for the Promotion of International Trade said the trip to the UK was aimed to help businesses from both sides get familiar with each other's investment environment and policies, and their industrial advantages.

"This is a valuable opportunity for communication and networking," the official said. "I hope this event can be followed by practical collaborations and win-win partnerships."

After the promotion event, the

SCPT signed a framework agreement for trade and business cooperation with the UK Chinese Business Association, an organization for the overseas Chinese business community in Britain.

Spanish trip

On Oct 13, the Shanxi delegation held a trade and investment promotion event in Spain's coastal city of Barcelona, aiming to help Shanxi's businesses find opportunities to cooperate with their Spanish counterparts.

The delegation also held a meeting with the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises, aiming to enhance the exchanges and cooperation between SMEs from both sides.

Spain is China's fifth-largest trading partner in the European Union and China is Spain's largest trading partner outside the EU.

According to data released by the General Administration of Customs of China, the trade volume between China and Spain amounted to \$48.58 billion in 2023. China mainly exports textiles, machinery, electronics, transport equipment, chemicals and light industry products to Spain, while it imports pork, wine, olive oil, machinery, plastics and minerals from that country.

During the Barcelona event, Sergio Sanchez Famoso, head of the Barcelona provincial bureau of commerce, delivered a speech at the Shanxi promotion. He said that his bureau is willing to offer high-quality

ty services to help Shanxi's businesses expand in Spain. He also suggested Shanxi companies research local market demand for mapping out accurate marketing strategies.

Lin Feng, chairman of the Federation of Overseas Chinese Associations in Spain, was present at the event. He made a speech on the potential cooperation opportunities between Shanxi and Barcelona's businesses.

"Today's promotion event presents to our local business community a vivid picture of the fast-developing Shanxi," Lin said. "With abundant natural resources, a long history, brilliant culture, and a rapidly modernizing economy, Shanxi is showing unlimited possibilities for business development."

"On the other hand, Barcelona has great development potential in science, technology, culture, new energy, agriculture and urban development. Those are the complementary advantages of each other, which can lay a solid foundation for win-win cooperation."

Lin said that he hopes enterprises from both Shanxi and Barcelona to make better use of the event to explore the markets of each side and establish practical collaborations.

An official from the SCPT said that he also hopes enterprises in Spain and Shanxi use the event to get a better understanding of each other's advantages and find the best paths for cooperation.

He noted that the economies of both Spain and Shanxi are in a transformation toward green, sustainable and innovation-driven development, so the businesses should enhance cooperation in the green economy, new energy, energy conservation, environmental protection and the digital economy. And there should also be practical exchanges in the fields of culture, education and sciences.

At the Barcelona event, the SCPT and the Spanish Federation of Overseas Chinese Entrepreneurs signed a framework agreement for strengthening trade and investment cooperation.

Rare chance

Following the conclusion of the promotional events in the UK and Spain, many corporate delegates said the trips were a rare chance for

business expansion in the two countries and across Europe as well.

Zhao Xuquan, board chairman of Liangjingjing Casseroles based in the Shanxi county of Pingding, was one of the delegation members.

He said during the trips to the UK and Spain, his company's products were exhibited to local businesses and garnered attention from potential buyers. "This was also an opportunity to learn, to network and to identify partners," Zhao said.

"The Pingding-made casserole pot is a product developed based on local raw materials and traditional production techniques that are recognized as Shanxi's intangible heritage. It is also a product with a national geographical indication," Zhao said. "We hope to use the two events to promote this unique product to the world."

Li Yanhong, head of the Shanxi-based Zhong Lv Law Firm, was another member of the Shanxi delegation. During the trips, Li held intensive talks with counterparts and business representatives in Britain and Spain.

"The trips gave me a glimpse into the legal systems of the UK and Spain, which represent the Anglo-American and Continental systems — two of the most popular legal systems in the world," Li said. "I will further study the laws and regulations of the two countries, as well as the rest of Europe, aiming to offer better services for our Shanxi enterprises' overseas operations," she added.

Organized by the city's international trade promotional council, Yuncheng arranged a large delegation of its own for the UK and Spanish trips.

Cao Weihong, chairwoman of the council, said the delegation members of Yuncheng were mainly representatives from the Yuncheng Salt Lake High-Tech Industrial Development Zone.

"We have visited some industrial parks in the two countries to learn from their experiences in the operation of industrial parks," Cao said. "We have also held talks with local industrial associations and businesses, hoping to have practical collaborations in fields such as high-tech innovation, environmental protection and tourism."

Li Yao contributed to this story.



From left: The first freight train from Shanxi to Spain is met by representatives in Madrid on Oct 16, 2023, a major milestone of China-Spain. An aerial view of a massive solar farm in Shilou county, Shanxi province. Blue skies above a coking plant in Shanxi are evidence of the province's achievements in the clean production of energy. An interprovincial power transmission line from Shanxi supplies electricity to the rest of the country. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

