

'Can do' attitude in revolution town

Yan'an is being transformed, reinvigorated by President Xi Jinping's 2015 visit to small village where he began his career

By ZHANG ZHIHAO

in Yan'an, Shaanxi

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Yan'an, a city in Northwest China's Shaanxi province viewed as the sacred cradle of the Chinese revolution, has earned a new identity in recent years — a place with a "can do" attitude where optimism, diligence and human ingenuity are found throughout its mountains and plateaus.

On the side of the highway near Baicaotai village in Shunning township, there is a field of several strange hills, each around 10 meters long and 5 meters tall. Each hill has a steep, muddy slope on one side, but on the other side is a plastic greenhouse supported by harnesses nailed from the muddy slope.

After entering the greenhouse, visitors can find strawberries, watermelons and other fruit that are supposedly impossible to grow on the sandy and barren Loess Plateau. "These are our gardens of prosperity," said Hao Bin, the township mayor.

In the past, Yan'an would suffer heavy soil losses every year, and farmers' yearly harvests were at the mercy of nature, he said. "We had experts design the shelters according to our situation. They concluded that using mud walls can significantly reduce the cost of the greenhouse, so every family can own one and grow high-value produce," Hao said.

Each greenhouse cost around 80,000 yuan (\$12,650) to make. The local government covered about



Xiao Jiapeng, 6, performs a waist drum dance with other villagers in Ansai district, Yan'an, in Northwest China's Shaanxi province on Jan 17. The colorful community is finding prosperity through its 'can do' attitude. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

30,000 yuan and provided seeds, fertilizer and training, he said. To cut the cost even further, farmers eliminate the use of pesticide by planting green onions and crown daisies along with the fruit to drive away pests.

"We might not have the most fertile soil, but we're willing to overcome anything and make the most out of our available resources for the most benefit of the people," he said.

This idea of overcoming natural limitation with human ingenuity worked. In 2017, each greenhouse earned 30,000 to 50,000 yuan, and the average income of 810 Baicao-

tai villagers rose to 13,600 yuan per year, much higher than the provincial poverty line, Hao said.

Baicaotai embodies Yan'an people's new drive toward prosperity after the 2015 visit of President Xi Jinping to Liangjiahe, a small village in northeastern Yan'an where he began his career.

In 1969, Xi, along with 14 other teenagers from Beijing, arrived at the village. For the next seven years, Xi created marsh wells for methane gas, dug wells for irrigation, created the village's first gender-divided restrooms and built roads and river

banks while standing waist deep in icy waters.

In 1974, Xi was elected Party chief of the village committee — the start of his public career. In February 2015, he returned to Liangjiahe to visit families living in caves — the same caves he lived in decades ago.

"I took the first step of my life learning here in Liangjiahe. Don't underestimate this small village, everything here has great knowledge," he said. "I left Liangjiahe then, but I left my heart here."

That visit put Yan'an back into the national spotlight. Soon, skilled

workers and businesses with new ideas and opportunities poured into the city to help in its development.

Shi Xu, 25, returned to her hometown of Yan'an last year and now is a narrator at a museum dedicated to Xi's ideas and visions in Yan'an's new city zone.

"Yan'an used to have trouble attracting young people because the city was less developed and there weren't many opportunities," she said. "Now, Yan'an is experiencing a complete transformation, and I'm very proud to witness it firsthand."

Yan'an has a vast history and a bright future that might be hard to comprehend. However, much of its spirit can be better understood by tracing the history of a cup of *huangjiu*.

Around 5,000 years ago, legend has it that locals brewed the yellow spirit using common millet to honor the gods for good harvests and to send soldiers into battle.

About 80 years ago, the same drink was used to welcome the Chinese Red Army, which finished the 12,500-kilometer Long March led by the Communist Party of China forming the basis of the Communist victory.

"Although the crop used was ordinary, and the earliest version of the drink tasted unrefined, it encapsulated the generosity, optimism, diligence and innovative spirits of the Yan'an people even to this day," said Wang Pengju, chairman of Pengxiang Food Manufacturing Co.

"We Yan'an people have a 'can-do' and 'never give up' attitude. Where there is a will, there is a way," he said.

Airborne Silk Road takes off in Zhengzhou

International flight route between the Central Chinese city and Luxembourg helps to bolster global trade

By QI XIN in Zhengzhou

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More than 2,000 years ago, the ancient Silk Road unlocked the potential of economic exchanges and trade via camel with distant countries. Nowadays, air transportation plays a key role.

A new "Silk Road in the air" is booming in Zhengzhou, capital of Central China's Henan province, linking it all the way to Luxembourg. This international flight route between the two cities is helping to boost global trade.

Statistics show that total cargo shipments in and out of Zhengzhou Airport likely reached 500,000 metric tons in 2017, and cargo shipments to and from Luxembourg alone from Zhengzhou were expected to consti-

tute 150,000 tons of this, or nearly a third of the total cargo shipments, said Eric Erbacher, sales director of Cargolux Airlines International, Europe's biggest all-cargo airline.

Pointing to several large containers of fresh fruit, he said: "It only takes about 19 flight hours to deliver the South American cherries to Zhengzhou by charter flight, perfectly fresh."

"In South America, the cherries have enjoyed a bumper harvest, while China is booming now. We delivered them here directly to China to meet market demand as Christmas and New Year festivals are coming," Erbacher said in a LuxFresh store at the Zhengzhou Airport Economic Comprehensive Experimental Area.

President Xi Jinping first pushed for China to build a "Silk Road in the air" between Luxembourg and

Zhengzhou on June 14, 2017, during a meeting with visiting Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel in Beijing.

Xi said that China and Luxembourg should deepen cooperation in finance and production capacity within the framework of promoting the Belt and Road Initiative.

The initiative was proposed in 2013, and aims to build trade and infrastructure networks connecting Asia with Europe and Africa along the ancient Silk Road routes.

Erbacher said support for the "Silk Road in the air" showed a level of foresight and quick action needed to grasp new opportunities.

Xie Fuzhan, Party chief of Henan, said: "Unlike coastal cities, Zhengzhou is well connected by railway, air and highway."

He said both Luxembourg and Zhengzhou are key transport hubs that link airways and railways, and Zhengzhou has seen booming cooperation with Luxembourg in sectors including tourism, air transportation and railway shipping.

Since airfreight operations between the Henan Civil Aviation Development and Investment Co (HNCA) and Cargolux Airlines International began in 2014, the Zhengzhou-Luxembourg project has covered Germany, Belgium, Chile and the United States.

HNCA set up an integrated services platform of aviation logistics for international trade exchanges, and locals no longer need to go overseas to buy their favorite foreign products.

Tax benefits involving baggage and postal articles allow the products to

be sold at competitive prices and are available to locals, and they will then be delivered to other provinces based on Zhengzhou's logistical advantages.

Kang Shuxia, deputy general manager of Henan Airport Group, said: "Their cross-border or e-commerce businesses deliver fresh fruits, seafood, Australian live cattle and electronic products like iPhones, and this has made Zhengzhou Airport become one of the most comprehensive inland airports right now."

"The high value-added products would be picked up by air," said Erbacher. "In the past, the fashion garments have been mainly sold in the summer and winter seasons. However, fashion changes each week, so it also becomes a huge potential item in air transportation," he added.