



CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO

Flowering of a new era

In line with Chinese architectural norms, expo building's four-leaf clover shape reflects harmony

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Like the host city of Shanghai, world-famous for its mix of traditional Chinese and global culture, the main venue for the China International Import Expo (CIIE) also offered participants a similar feel, said a chief designer of the expo center.

On entering the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) or NECC, white magnolias — the city flower of Shanghai — were on prominent display as well as traditional Chinese ceilings, wooden sculptures, gardens in the traditional style, and the CIIE's mascot Jinbao, a giant panda wearing a scarf.

"The convention center has blended new and modern Chinese features," said Fu Haicong, chief architect of the East China Architectural

Design & Research Institute, a unit of leading Chinese architecture firm Areplus Group responsible for the center's design.

The institute also designed one of the artificial islands that connects the world's longest sea bridge, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge that opened in late October.

"For example, the building looks like a four-leaf clover from a bird's-eye view. In Western culture, it is a rare variation of the common three-leaf clover and believed to bring good luck," Fu said.

"The shape of the building is also in line with Chinese architecture's essence that seeks harmony and symmetry."

The four-leaf clover has become a symbol of the center, which adorns signs, pavements and decorations.

The four leaves also point to four different directions and divide the



The National Exhibition and Convention Center in Shanghai lights up the night sky. The six-day China International Import Expo was held at the center from Nov 5-10. DING TING / XINHUA

building into four parts with the south square as the main entrance of the building featuring 24 columns, which refer to the 24 solar terms in the traditional Chinese calendar.

The form also has practical reasons. Efficiency is a major concern considering the high land costs in Shanghai. According to the requirements of the organizers, the building should be able to offer four exhibition areas, each 100,000 square meters, and its height is limited to 43 meters due to its vicinity to Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport,

which is only 5 kilometers away.

The design also takes into consideration the terminal station of Metro Line 2, which sits right in the center of the land, as well as the complex road and traffic conditions nearby.

Jointly developed by the Ministry of Commerce and the Shanghai municipal government, the building has a gross floor area of 1.47 million square meters, almost 2.5 times that of the Shanghai Tower, the nation's tallest building.

In total, it contains 400,000 sq meters for indoor exhibition spaces

together with 100,000 sq meters outdoor space leading to the north square, and it is regarded as the world's largest single block building for an exhibition, said Fu.

All of the center's 16 exhibition halls are huge — the 13 main halls are 28,000 sq meters each and the other three are more than 30 meters high.

"However, due to the special requirements for the CIIE, which is not only merely a grand exhibition for imports, the building has earmarked spaces for bilateral and multilateral talks, and various forums," said Fu.

Expo upgrades shopping services

Shanghai event offers Chinese businesses goods from overseas, the best products on their doorstep

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The China International Import Expo (CIIE), held from Nov 5-10, where exhibitors from around the world brought their best products to Shanghai, can bring about upgrades in the city's shopping services and further integration of the Yangtze River Delta region, experts said.

"The expo will link Chinese business purchasers with a variety of goods from all over the world and make it possible for residents to buy the best products on their doorstep," said Zhang Min, executive head of Shanghai University's Shanghai Exhibition Research Institute.

As the world's first national import expo, CIIE is a landmark undertaking in the history of international trade. It attracted thousands of exporters from around the world and about 160,000 Chinese buyers.

It provided local businesses a competitive edge in targeting the more

than 200 million affluent consumers in the delta region, who tend to demand world-class products and services, Zhang said.

Although the delta region accounts for just 3.8 percent of China's total land area, its GDP amounted to 19.5 trillion yuan (\$3.08 trillion) last year, roughly 25 percent of the national total, official statistics show.

Shang Yuying, director of the Shanghai Commerce Commission, said the city has tapped into the opportunity to "improve the business environment, and emphasizes consolidating and enhancing our status as an international trade center."

"We aim to build Shanghai into a world-class shopping hub that offers the world's most updated, trendiest and most value-for-money selections," Shang said at a ceremony on June 15 that marked the beginning of the city's drive to become a choice destination for global product launches.

Shanghai has rolled out a series of measures this year to ensure the expo is a success and develop the city into a distribution hub for imported goods across China and Asia. One measure made it easier for imported goods and services to enter the city, and another was the establishment of year-round exhibition and transaction platforms to support the expo.

The commission said the platforms were established because the authorities recognized that the six-day expo would not provide international exhibitors and buyers with enough time to learn about all the business opportunities in China.

"The platforms will also promote the sustainable development of the expo and enhance Shanghai's brand as an international shopping destination," Shang said.

The Yangtze River Delta E-commerce Center, in the Hongqiao business district, is an example. Located near the National Exhibition and Convention Center, where CIIE was

held, the center is designed to serve as a year-round offline display platform for cross-border e-commerce operators from around the world, according to Huang Zhimin, general manager of Shanghai Kouxing Enterprise Management, the company responsible for the center's operation.

"It can be very costly for cross-border e-commerce operators to transport products to China once a year just for a six-day expo," Huang said. "We aim to offer them a transit platform where they can display their products between expos. This will not only help them achieve significant cost savings but also offers them year-round access to the local market."

Huang said more than 100 e-commerce operators have expressed interest in registering for a space at the center. Some, including vip.com, have opened offline stores.

Customers can select from imported products — mainly cosmetics, food and health products — at such stores and complete online customs

clearance through a mobile app. The e-commerce center provides an area of nearly 143,000 square meters that the enterprises can use as a bonded warehouse.

Thanks to the growing integration of transport, services and economies in the delta region, the expo's effect is not limited to Shanghai but will also spread to cities in the neighboring provinces of Zhejiang and Jiangsu in East China, boosting collaboration between cities in the region, experts said.

Zhao Huiqin, Party secretary of Shanghai's Qingpu district, said several collaborative projects have been implemented, including a plan to extend the Shanghai Metro to Jiashan in Zhejiang and Kunshan and Suzhou in Jiangsu, and a plan to build a 5G network in the delta region.

Scientific researchers in the delta region also said they were looking forward to the expo as it will allow them to view the world's top technology in their fields.