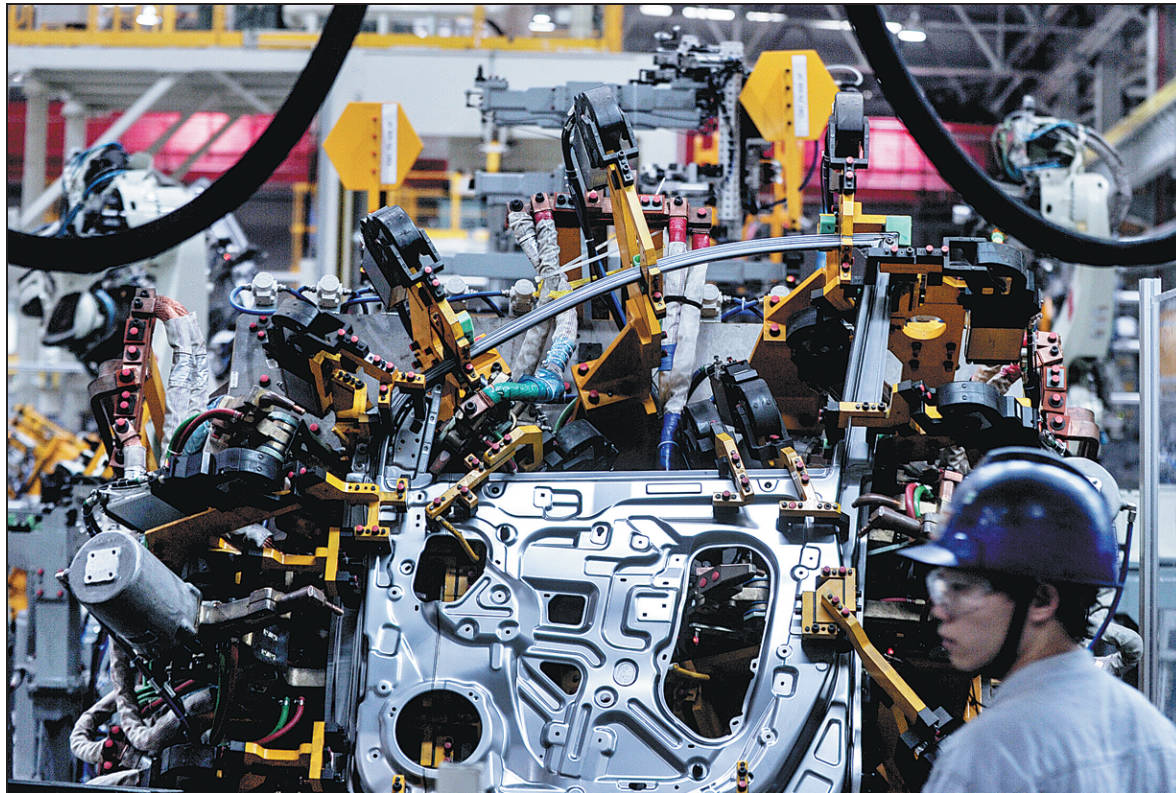


SOE MATTERS

Six priorities

POWERING AHEAD



An employee works on a Changan Auto assembly line in Chongqing in June. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Changan Auto posts higher sales

State-owned automaker reaps rewards from product transformation, upgrade

By ZHONG NAN
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With many of the world's automakers encountering a sluggish market amid the headwinds of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chongqing Changan Automobile Co Ltd is an exception and has made notable breakthroughs in sales in the first five months.

The automaker, a subsidiary of China North Industries Group Corp — a leading arms producer — saw its five-month export volume jump 11 percent on a yearly basis to 21,500 units, including sedans and sport utility vehicles. Sales soared 54.3 percent and 32.0 percent year-on-year to 174,012 units and 159,557 units in May and April, respectively.

This performance both at home and abroad was due to efforts to transform and upgrade product structure, operational modes and efficiency, as well as growing investment in the area of developing new energy vehicles and intelligent systems, industry experts said.

Shi Haifeng, general manager of Changan Auto's overseas business unit, said the company's full work resumption, new vehicle launches, government measures to stimulate auto consumption and a rebound in consumer confidence were contributing factors to its recent success.

"Chinese auto brands have made great strides thanks to improved quality and after-sales services, and sometimes they even outperform certain global names," Shi said, adding that many of the company's exported vehicles were shipped from Chongqing to Shanghai via inland waterways.

To minimize impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, the State-owned company enhanced contact with domestic and foreign suppliers to coordinate delivery times of various components and ensure normal operations and timely deliveries.

Eager to compete with other established rivals both at home and abroad, Shi said Changan Auto has adopted more digital technologies and formed partnerships with companies in other sectors to upgrade its product range amid a wider industry shift toward developing smart connected vehicles.

"The future development trend of the auto industry should be the deep integration and collaborative innovation between traditional automakers and internet companies," he said. "All the steps are digitally synchronized to ensure execution and complete alignment with customer demand."

A number of global players from Germany, France, Japan and the United States have already

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Shi Haifeng,
general manager of Changan Auto's overseas business unit

digitalized their entire value chain, from product design and research and development, through to logistics, production and related services.

Backed by 15 manufacturing bases and 35 auto and engine plants around the world, Changan Auto now has 12,000 technicians from 24 countries, and has established R&D facilities in Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the US and Germany.

Even though China's January-May automobile output and sales totaled 7.79 million and 7.96 million units, respectively, a year-on-year drop of 24.1 percent and 22.6 percent, the country's auto market stepped up recovery in May, with both production and sales showing

double-digit growth, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

Total automotive output stood at 2.194 million units in May, up 18.2 percent on a yearly basis, and sales hit 2.187 million units, up 14.5 percent. In terms of passenger cars, contraction came to an end both in terms of production and sales last month, with 11.2 percent and 7 percent growth registered, respectively, or 1.66 million and 1.67 million units.

To maintain solid economic fundamentals, the government has emphasized the importance of focusing on the "six priorities" of safeguarding employment, people's livelihoods, the development of market entities, food and energy security, the stable operation of industrial and supply chains and the smooth functioning of society.

Chen Bin, executive vice-president of the China Machinery Industry Federation in Beijing, said it is vital for China to boost exports in sectors such as passenger vehicles, electronics, furniture, clothing and foodstuffs as they involve large numbers of upstream and downstream industries with millions of industrial workers.

A healthy growth of the automobile industry can benefit rubber material providers, refinery companies, glass, tire, steel, sensor, gearbox and battery manufacturers, as well as road project contractors, digital maps and insurance services, Chen added.

Sinopharm steps up efforts in developing vaccines for COVID-19

By ZHENG YIRAN
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Sinopharm Group is speeding up development of a candidate vaccine for the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, with more milestones having been achieved by the Chinese State-owned pharmaceutical giant ahead of hoped-for mass production.

According to a statement from China National Biotech Group Co Ltd, Sinopharm's vaccine and bioscience unit, Phase-1 and Phase-2 clinical trials of its inactivated vaccine have shown a 100 percent antibody-positive conversion rate, demonstrating good performance in safety and effectiveness on volunteers, with no subjects showing serious adverse reactions.

"There are three clinical trial phases and a total of 1,120 volunteers have been vaccinated during the Phase-1 and Phase-2 clinical trials. All of the subjects have proved to have produced a high-concentration of antibodies," the company said.

The group's inactivated vaccine is among the world's first batch to acquire clinical trial approval, and the results collected are the world's first clinical data on safety and effectiveness after two doses of vaccination, offering scientific and measurable support for epidemic prevention and control and emergency use, industry insiders said.

Although the vaccine is inactivated, the antigenic compound it contains can stimulate production of antibodies in humans.

"The results of the Phase-1 and Phase-2 clinical trials of the inactivated vaccine are encouraging," said Chen Qiaoshan, a medical analyst at Beijing-based market consultancy Analysys. "However, it still requires much more effort in related research and development as the Phase-3 clinical trials are critical."

Hang Yuting, an editor at healthcare new media platform Healthcare Scientists, said that normally there are three phases of clinical trials for vaccines. Phase-1 values safety with the clinical trial scale relatively small. Phase-2 explores the vaccine procedure and dose while evaluating safety and efficacy. The third phase is the key to assessing vaccine efficacy, and requires large-scale trials, Hang said.

With the virus outbreak still ongoing, the research and development period of the vaccine will be shorter than under normal conditions, and it is estimated that people can access the preventive vaccine as early as in this fall. Healthcare experts in countries and regions around the world are worried that the pandemic will see a new peak in fall and winter. Therefore, they are putting great emphasis on vaccine R&D and are working at full capacity, she added.

The world is racing to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, but this is not a competition between countries, but rather a race between humans and the virus."

Yang Xiaoming, president of CNBG, Sinopharm's vaccine and bioscience unit

1,120

total number of volunteers that have taken part in the Phase-1 and Phase-2 clinical trials of CNBG's inactivated COVID-19 vaccine

CNBG said that once three trials for the inactivated vaccine are completed, the product should hit the market by the end of this year or early 2021.

"The world is racing to develop a COVID-19 vaccine, but this is not a competition between countries, but rather a race between humans and the virus," said Yang Xiaoming, president of CNBG.

Wu Gangliang, a researcher at the China Enterprise Reform and Development Society, said: "SOEs play a fundamental role in China's economic development. They also contributed greatly in the fight against the pandemic. SOEs like CNBG have large-scale assets, strong production capacity to produce essential materials. These advantages enable SOEs to guarantee production during the special period."

On Feb 1, Sinopharm launched the "2019-nCoV Inactivated Vaccine" project and researchers began working on the vaccine. Thirteen days later, the research team succeeded in making purified antigens. On Feb 16, immunological studies in animals including rats, mice and rhesus monkeys were launched to verify vaccine efficacy.

On Feb 28, a level-3 virus seed bank was established and batch production of the vaccine for clinical trial registration started.

On April 12, the inactivated vaccine was approved for clinical trials by the National Medical Products Administration, being the first inactivated vaccine worldwide to reach such a developed approval stage.

CNBG launched Phase-2 human trials of its first inactivated vaccine on April 24. The vaccine was codeveloped by the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products and the Wuhan Institute of Virology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

PROJECT WATCH

Major milestone achieved in Yunnan rail project

By MA CHENGUANG
and ZHUANG QIANG

Chinese builders completed construction on the 832.2-meter-long Yuanjiang Super Railway Bridge, spanning the V-shaped Honghe River Canyon in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

It is the highest and longest-span railway bridge pier of its kind in the world, and showcases the smooth progress of the Chinese section of the 925.5-kilometer China-Laos railway, a major project in the Belt and Road Initiative.

The bridge was perfectly joined on Wednesday by builders from China Tiesiju Civil Engineering Group (CTCE) after a construction period of more than four years.

The dual-track bridge, located in Yuanjiang, Yuxi city, is one of 134 bridges to be built on the 508.5-km Chinese section of the railway, that will link Yuxi and the Lao capital Vientiane when fully operational in December 2021, said Kang Ning,



China Tiesiju Civil Engineering Group employees complete the closure of the Yuanjiang Super Railway Bridge in Yunnan province on Wednesday. XU GUO / FOR CHINA DAILY

publicity chief at CTCE Fifth Engineering Co Ltd.

The main span of the Yuanjiang bridge, with six piers in total, is 249 meters long while its No 3 pier is 154

meters high — about the height of a 54-story high-rise, said Liu Wei, deputy chief engineer at the First Civil Engineering Design and Research Institute under China Railway

832.2 meters

total length of the Yuanjiang Super Railway Bridge in Honghe River Canyon, Yunnan province

Eryuan Engineering Group.

The foundation of the No 3 pier reaches 78 meters underground, and took 22 months to build before official construction of the above-ground portion broke ground on Aug 20, 2018, Liu said.

Construction of the No 3 pier, which can withstand a maximum wind speed of more than 40 meters per-second, was an engineering challenge and will help maintain safety and security going forward, he said.

"After many demonstrations, a construction scheme was proposed consisting of two reinforced concrete hollow piers to be connected horizontally by the pier top beam and the middle X-shaped steel

structure. This first innovation mode of its kind in the country provides a Chinese plan for the construction of similar bridges with similar geological conditions in the future," Liu said.

Construction on the Chinese section, also called the Yuxi-Mohan Railway, began in April 2016 with an investment of 51.6 billion yuan (\$7.3 billion), with 86.12 percent involving bridges and tunnels, joining the Mohan-Boten border crossing in northern Laos.

The 417-km-long Lao section, linking Mohan-Boten and Vientiane, has an operating speed of 160 km per hour with an investment of 37.4 billion yuan, said Ouyang Shi, chief engineer for the CTCE Yuxi-Mohan Railway project.

Li Pengcheng, manager of the project, said the railway will be vital for Laos in overcoming challenges in shifting from being "landlocked" to being "land-linked," lowering production costs and attracting more traders, investors and tourists to Laos.

As a demonstration project in China's "going global" strategy, the China-Laos railway is an achievement in Sino-Lao cooperation

under the BRI, which aims to build a modern-day Silk Road connecting economies in Asia, Africa and Europe by land and by sea, he said.

China aims to build a 5,500-km Trans-Asia Railway, which begins in Yunnan's provincial capital Kunming and wends its way through Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Malaysia before terminating in Singapore, Li said.

China and Thailand started building Thailand's first high-speed railway in December 2017, which will link with the China-Laos railway, he said.

Mou Ping, a 24-year-old builder from Guizhou province in Southwest China, said he has been working on the No 3 pier of the Yuanjiang bridge since March 2018, and the job has been challenging when working amid abundant rainfall, high temperatures, strong winds and even seismic activity.

"But now the two sections of the bridge are connected, and as a builder of this super bridge, I feel very proud. Also, I've earned a handsome income from it," he said.

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