

SOE MATTERS

Big projects abroad progress on SOE push

Reliable supply chains of Chinese firms and strong preventive moves boost recovery

By **ZHONG NAN**
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China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises have either completed or made breakthroughs in a number of big-ticket projects in overseas markets in the fourth quarter of this year, thanks to their reliable supply chains and partner countries' better-than-expected performance in containing the COVID-19 pandemic and boosting the local economy, according to the country's State-asset regulator.

Supported by China's early recovery from the pandemic, central SOEs have become a vital force in many countries' fight against the pandemic.

SOEs have helped them to restore their growth power by adding investment in both the infrastructure and services sectors, said Ren Hongbin, vice-chairman of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council.

At a recent work meeting, Ren urged central SOEs to improve comprehensive opening-up and cooperation, leverage the strengths of China's mega-sized markets and prioritize the growth of the Belt and Road Initiative to boost SOEs' go-global efforts.

Central SOE's construction pace of the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway project in Indonesia and the Bulim Square industrial project in Singapore is being increased.

China State Construction Engineering Corp and China Communications Construction Co Ltd are executing the projects, respectively.

Last month, Central SOEs completed the construction of the first phase of the Khalifa Port freight terminal project in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, the largest container freight station in the Middle East.

Located at Khalifa Port, the 274,000-square-meter project is to be built in two phases. The first phase just completed covers about 156,000 square meters and includes a 53,000 sq m steel-structured warehouse, six main supporting buildings, 12 interior supporting buildings for the warehouse and



A worker observes construction at a harbor in Colombo, Sri Lanka, commissioned by China Harbour Engineering Co Ltd on Dec 1.

TANG LU / XINHUA

ancillary facilities, said Lin Yichong, chairman of China Harbour Engineering Co Ltd, the main builder for this project.

Once operational, the station will provide services like container transport and packaging.

By linking the container port with the industrial zones, he said the station will play a role in building a competitive regional logistics hub and a shipping service.

The executive said that continued foreign and domestic investment in infrastructure development such as ports, roads and airports will be key elements in supporting economic growth in many developing countries, especially those participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, at least over the next decade, creating better conditions to stimulate trade and people-to-people exchanges in this massive market.

Not far away from the UAE, the Karachi K2 generator unit in Pakistan, China's first overseas Hualong One nuclear reactor, began charging late last month, laying a solid foundation for reaching a critical state and operations.

China National Nuclear Corp or CNNC, the Hualong One technology's developer and constructor, said in a statement that the project is expected to produce nearly 10 billion kilowatt-hours of power annually after its completion, providing local people with safe and clean energy. It has driven growth of relevant industries and created more than 10,000 jobs in Pakistan.

The charging of the plant is a milestone for Hualong One, China's third-generation nuclear power technology with complete proprietary intellectual property rights, and will improve Hualong One technology's competitiveness in countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, the company said.

A major result of the nuclear power cooperation between China and Pakistan, the progress of the K2 generator unit lifted Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership to a new level. With a design life of 60 years, it is equipped with the special nuclear fuel assemblies developed by CNNC, setting the refueling cycle at about 18 months.

As its innovative security system

also meets the highest international standards, the Chinese company said it is an iconic achievement of the innovative development of China's nuclear power industry. CNNC is currently building six Hualong One nuclear power generator units across the world.

China Railway Construction Corp (International) Ltd, an international arm of China Railway Construction Corp Ltd, or CRCC, also announced it completed the main body of the Cabinda water supply project in Angola, the largest of its kind under construction in the country in late October.

"We maintained its construction schedule while taking efficient measures to prevent and control the pandemic since the first quarter of this year," said Wang Wenzhong, vice-president of Beijing-headquartered CRCC.

Meantime, the company fulfilled social responsibilities by providing water-delivery vehicles to local water companies for free and offering about 6,000 jobs for residents in affected areas, he said.

"Angola has rich water resources that can benefit local people by

building dams, water purification plants, reservoirs and irrigation systems," he said. "However, certain parts of the country don't have access to clean water because of low-efficiency water supplies. Providing sufficient drinkable water has become a priority for the Angolan government."

Unclean water supplies, caused by old pipelines and purification equipment, are a cause of cholera, dysentery and other deadly diseases prevalent in the country.

Upon completion, the project will improve the sanitary quality of the public drinking water in the region, benefiting about 110,000 Angolan residents.

"Some Western media said that Chinese companies in Africa have no interest in communicating and helping local people whatsoever, which is not true," said Wei Xiaquan, a researcher specializing in regional economic development at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

They have made a contribution to the local community with concrete steps, which are not included in the contracts, he said.

Corporate hospital on wheels spreads vision

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, the world's biggest fuel refiner, has donated more than 180 million yuan (\$27.5 million) since 2004 to help cataract patients in 18 provinces with eye surgery.

The company, better known as Sinopec, first set up a mobile ophthalmic hospital called the Sinopec Lifeline Express on a special four-car railway train in 2007 to offer eye surgery training for cataract removal. After some decades of development, the hospital on wheels has provided free medical care to over 46,000 poverty-stricken cataract patients, it said.

The Sinopec Lifeline Express has traveled to Hezhou, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, earlier this month. It plans to offer eye surgery services to 1,000 local patients during its three-month stay.

Luo Haixue, a 3-year-old girl with congenital cataracts, received a free surgery earlier this month. She was born with cataracts. But, her family could not afford the surgery to help restore her vision. Luo always hoped that one day she could see the world clearly.

Her dream finally came true with the surgery, which also made her the youngest patient to have recovered from surgery onboard the mobile hospital.

According to the Chinese Ophthalmological Society of the Chinese Medical Association, in 2018, the morbidity of cataracts reached 80 percent in those aged 60 to 89, and 90 percent of those aged above 90 in China.

\$27.5 million

donation by China Petroleum and Chemical Corp to help cataract patients since 2004

The Sinopec Lifeline Express is well equipped with medical facilities, including clinics, laboratories, surgery rooms, sterilizing rooms, patient rooms and inpatient wards. For surgeries, its well-trained medical team uses the most advanced intraocular lens whose success rate is up to 99.99 percent.

It invites eye experts from across the country's top hospitals to provide patients with the most professional and advanced medical services, it said.

According to Sinopec, before COVID-19 struck, the express train used to travel to three poverty-stricken regions every year for a three-month stay at each stop.

It treats 3,000 patients each year on average and also conducts professional medical training with local hospitals to enhance the professional level of ophthalmology in diagnosis, surgery and treatment.

As the pandemic comes under better control, the hospital on wheels is rolling again. To ensure more patients receive treatment, the company has publicized information about it through various platforms. It has also taken advantage of its retail network countrywide to spread the news.

The Sinopec Lifeline Express is part of the larger Lifeline Express charity project of the Chinese Lifeline Express Foundation. The project comprises four train-based mobile ophthalmologic hospitals that have treated more than 210,000 patients in 28 provinces and municipalities. The Sinopec Lifeline Express is the only one built entirely with donations from domestic enterprises.

High-speed train maker fares well amid COVID pandemic

By **ZHONG NAN** in Beijing and **LIU MINGTAI** in Changchun

With China planning to build new railways and export more high-end manufactured products during its 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), CRRC Tangshan Co Ltd, a Hebei province-based high-speed train maker, said it is ready to take orders for customized trains in line with the technical standards and operational requirements in different parts of the world.

After supplying maglev trains with a top speed of 120 kilometers per hour for a line in Qingyuan, Guangdong province, 60 passenger coaches to Nigeria and 10 diesel multiple unit (DMU) trains to Angola over the past two years, CRRC Tangshan has now rolled out a 400 km/h high-speed train at its production line in late October.

The high-speed train can cope with different rail systems on international routes, making international rail travel more convenient. It can also operate in temperatures between -25 C and 50 C, said Du Huiqian, deputy chief engineer of CRRC Zhuzhou, a unit of China Railway Rolling Stock Corp, the country's largest rolling stock manufacturer by production volume.

Apart from building both regular and maglev high-speed trains, high-power locomotives, railroad trucks and urban rail transit vehicles, Du said high-speed freight trains and 30,000-metric-ton heavy-duty trains, as well as new special trains for standardized containerized freight, cold chain logistics and cross-border freight transportation, will be the next growth point for China's railway



A CRRC Tangshan employee examines a high-speed train at a facility in Tangshan, Hebei province, on Dec 4. XING GUANGLI / XINHUA

transport equipment sector.

In addition to CRRC Tangshan's operations that focus on Europe and certain parts of Asia, CRRC's other operations in Qingdao, Shandong province, and Changchun, Jilin province, have also been carrying out research and development on new trains targeting the needs of Russia and Southeast Asian markets.

Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has been destructive to the global economy, especially for services sector operators, airlines and shipping firms, it has brought

opportunities for rail freight companies such as goods and service providers for China-Europe freight train routes, Du said.

He added that China's steady economic recovery and its decision to build the new dual-circulation development paradigm, in which the domestic market is the mainstay and domestic and foreign markets complement each other, will create opportunities for the country's train manufacturers and related service contractors to remain competitive amid the raging pandemic worldwide.

Thanks to China's massive railway networks and fast-growing metro markets, the country's railway passenger and cargo transportation sector is still seeing steady growth thanks to high capacity and ecologically friendly practices, said Feng Hao, a researcher at the Institute of Comprehensive Transportation affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission.

Railway expansion plans should stay moderately ahead of current needs, Feng said.

China aims to raise its global competitiveness in the railway sector by

expanding its railway networks with wider coverage and higher speeds. It plans to have 200,000 km of track laid by the end of 2035, including about 70,000 km of high-speed track, according to the latest national railway plan, issued in August by China State Railway Group, the country's top railroad operator.

With the plan in place, all cities with populations of over 200,000 will be connected to the railway network by then, and those with a population of over 500,000 will be on high-speed rail lines, according to the plan.

As China's fast-growing railway service networks, especially high-speed tracks, have significantly saved travel time, helped integrate regional economies, raised business efficiency and transformed the nation's economic map, many countries including Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia have been keen to adopt such modes to develop their economies, said Yuan Bo, deputy director at the Institute of Asian Studies, affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce's Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

The country's railway network handled 3.66 billion passenger trips and carried 4.32 billion tons of cargo in 2019, jumping 93.3 percent and 10.6 percent, respectively, compared with 2012.

The maximum speed of China's current high-speed trains rose to 350 km/h when the Fuxing (Rejuvenation) high-speed trains began operating between Beijing and Shanghai in 2017. A maglev train with a designed speed of 600 km/h successfully completed a test run in June.