

SOE MATTERS

THE THIRD CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO

CIIE promotes State, foreign firms' tie-ups

Shanghai event 'great platform' for companies to deepen cooperation

By ZHONG NAN in Shanghai
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

The third China International Import Expo is promoting wider and deeper collaboration between China's State-owned enterprises and businesses around the world. This further testifies the country's commitment to opening-up, said business leaders from both domestic and foreign companies.

The majority of China's 98 centrally-administered SOEs — including China State Shipbuilding Corp, China Grain Reserves Group Ltd and China State Construction Engineering Corp — have all signed purchase and cooperation deals with foreign companies such as Siemens, Honeywell, ABB and Dow Chemical during the third CIIE being held in Shanghai from Thursday to Tuesday, said the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council.

"The appeal of the previous two CIIEs was beyond our expectations and the feedback was overwhelming. It has opened a brand-new world for our businesses to better connect with other leading global companies to develop projects across the world, especially in markets related to the Belt and Road Initiative," said Wang Tongzhou, chairman of Beijing-based China Communications Construction Co Ltd.

For instance, Japanese businesses are proficient in forming consortia to conduct projects in overseas markets. These can be formed by manufacturers, infrastructure project contractors, banks, insurance companies, and other types of service suppliers, he said, adding that Chinese companies can learn from this practical method and deepen cooperation with their Japanese partners.

"As an international carrier, we are always committed to working with global suppliers and partners to better serve our passengers. And the expo has provided us a great platform for sourcing and collaboration," said Wang Changshun, chairman of China Southern Airlines.

Jeffrey Wong, head of advisory for China business at global consultancy KPMG, said as many economies have been forced to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CIIE is a great opportunity for global companies interested in expanding in the Chinese market.

More than 70 percent of Fortune 500 companies and major players from different industries, including many newcomers, are in Shanghai for the expo this year, and some of them have already signed up for the event for the next three years, with the expo emerging as the platform of choice for many to launch new products and showcase new technologies, according to the CIIE

Bureau, the event's organizer.

China is accelerating a new development pattern in which the nation's domestic and international-focused economic engines support each other. This will create more opportunities and space for foreign companies to develop in China, and will help foster new advantages for multinational companies to cooperate with Chinese counterparts, especially SOEs, Wong said.



Therefore it is necessary for SOEs to strategically develop entire value chains surrounding their products and services, while promoting lean management, innovation and reform."

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head of advisory for China business at global consultancy KPMG

As China rolls out its 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), he said Chinese companies must not only be aligned with the country's goals for the development of the domestic economy, but also pay close attention to global economic and commercial trends. In addition to addressing the individual challenges they face, they should benchmark their practices against industry-leading firms both at home and abroad.

"Therefore it is necessary for SOEs to strategically develop entire value chains surrounding their products and services, while promoting lean management, innovation and reform," said Wong. "While having a long-term vision for future development is critical, they must also develop sufficient short- and medium-term development goals."

The ability of SOEs to develop systematically by demonstrating clear vision, vitality, capacity building and industry deployment defines the objective of "high-quality growth", he added.

"We expect SOEs to build more scientific and assessable cost and performance management systems centered on institutional innovation, management transformation and cost optimization," he said, adding that this will be an important starting point for SOEs to improve cost and performance management, enhance the comprehensive effect of reforms and boost technological innovation.



A China Mobile employee displays a 5G-enabled drone during an exhibition in Nantong, Jiangsu province. XU CONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

5G applications enhance several industries

By MA SI
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

At the mountain-ringed Tingzikou hydropower station in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, a gigantic 5G-enabled underwater robot swims in a stilling basin, which is basically a 20-meter-deep pool or reservoir that can reduce turbulence of water flow.

Equipped with cameras, the robot will shoot pictures and videos of the pool walls and transmit them in real time to a command center, which then determines whether the walls are strong enough to withstand future floods, or if they would need repairs.

The robot is part of a 5G-powered hydropower station project jointly executed by China Mobile, China Datang Corp, one of the largest power generation enterprises, and Tsinghua University. It is the first time that the super-fast 5G technology has been applied in the hydropower sector in China.

The endeavor is also part of China Mobile's broader push to promote 5G applications in traditional sectors.

China Mobile is working hard to partner with electricity, tourism, manufacturing and healthcare industries to explore where the biggest potential is for 5G to boost efficiency in real business cases and promote industrial upgrade.

Wang Haoran, an expert from Tsinghua University's Sichuan Energy Internet Research Institute, said every three to five years, or every time after a major flood, the Tingzikou hydropower station's stilling basin undergoes a thorough check.

In the pre-robotics era, workers would undertake deep dives to build a cofferdam for such checks, which were relatively inefficient, time-consuming and tended to hamper electricity supply. "Such a process could consume three to six months and cost around 5 million yuan (\$748,000)," Wang said.

But 5G robots can accomplish the task in about 20 days as they obviate the need to pump out water from the stilling basin, besides doing some basic work like removing silt. "The cost of each check can be lowered to 700,000 yuan," said Wang.

5G-powered drones are also used in dam checks. By integrating artificial intelligence, big data and other cutting-edge technologies, China Mobile has built a high-precision dam surface inspection system that uses autonomous 5G drones, which can map in 3D.

Currently, workers remote-control 5G robots and drones. But China Mobile said it is working hard with China Datang Group toward unmanned smart checks of hydro-power stations.

The 5G-enabled hydropower sta-



Visitors check out a virtual library supported by China Mobile's 5G and virtual reality technologies during a book fair in Shanghai in August. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



Industrial customers demand not only large bandwidth, low latency and large-scale connectivity of 5G, but also call for efficient operations and maintenance and other diversified network capabilities."

Zhao Dachun, deputy general manager of China Mobile

tion is one of China Mobile's 100 key 5G industrial projects across 15 industries. Earlier this year, Zhao Dachun, deputy general manager of China Mobile, said, "Industrial customers demand not only large bandwidth, low latency and large-scale connectivity of 5G, but also call for efficient operations and maintenance and other diversified network capabilities."

As of September, China Mobile has built more than 350,000 5G base stations. Its 5G services are available in all Chinese cities at prefecture level and above. This has laid a solid foundation for wider industrial applications of 5G.

For instance, China Mobile has partnered with firefighters to use 5G-powered drones in rescue operations. Such drones function as firefighters' eyes in the sky, and can serve as an essential firefighting tool for people in the fire services, especially in and around urban centers where high-rises are potential candidates for deadly infernos.

Liu Dong, drone industry

research director at China Mobile (Chengdu) Industrial Research Institute, said 5G-enabled drones can fly as high as 300 meters, which means they can quickly reach the height of a 100-story building. In comparison, it takes about a half-hour to fully unpack a 100-meter-high fire ladder.

Drones can also help firefighters acquire aerial information in a quick, cost-effective manner. In April 2019, 5G-enabled drones were used to help put out a forest fire in Sichuan province.

Drones equipped with high-resolution cameras and infrared detection technology were dispatched to the mountainous terrain, from where they transmitted footage of the leaping flames over 5G networks to emergency dispatch headquarters.

Responders, rather than waiting for drones to return to start processing the data, could immediately begin parsing the video with AI image algorithms, helping them better understand the crisis and concentrate rescue efforts.

Jiang Hua, head of the emergency management bureau in Zigong, Sichuan province, said 5G-powered drones have been instrumental in dealing with emergencies. In the future, the bureau will effect more measures to better integrate 5G with the existing emergency and rescue system.

But analysts said 5G-powered drones may have a limited role in putting out urban fires, given that more efforts are needed to solve policy issues and restrictions on the use of airspace, Liu said.

With 5G networks covering more cities, China Mobile is exploring how to use the technology to help upgrade the tourism sector.

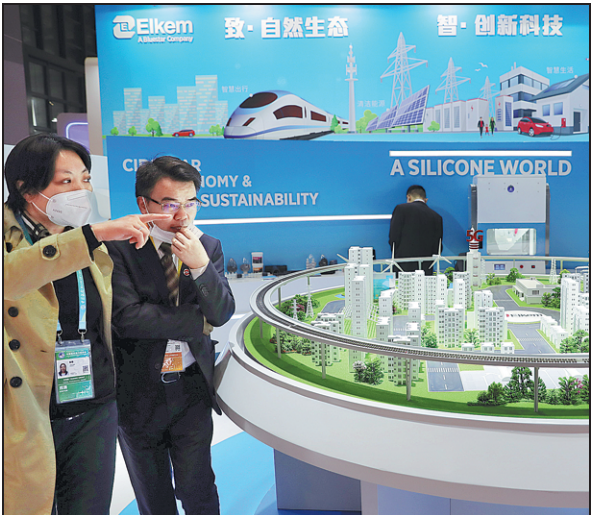
It has partnered with local companies to build Mengbala, a digital-strong town in the Xishuangbanna Dai autonomous prefecture in Southwest China's Yunnan province.

Mengbala is popular among tourists who throng it in droves during the peak season and typically struggle to find toilets available for use. But, with the help of China Mobile's internet of things technologies, tourists can use an app to easily locate a nearest toilet (much like finding a rentable bicycle using apps such as Mobike or Hello). App-users can even figure the number of people lined up before a toilet, to know the approximate waiting time.

China Mobile has also built a cloud platform for the management of Mengbala, which enables smart environment monitoring, smart parking, smart hotel booking, smart ticketing, virtual reality livestreaming and other functions.

For instance, when sightseeing tour cars in the town depart from their designated tracks or permissible speeds, the IoT chip in the cars would automatically send an alarm to the town's digital management platform, and security personnel will take corresponding action to solve the problem.

Cao Xin, an employee at China Mobile's branch in Xishuangbanna, said the company has built 13 5G base stations for the digital town. "With a string of cameras to capture the 360-degree images of the town, consumers can watch VR livestreaming of beautiful scenes such as the town surrounded by a 'sea' of clouds in the morning, even when they can not physically visit the town. That is one of the wonders of 5G-empowered tourism," Cao said.



An employee from Elkem (left), a subsidiary of State-owned China National Chemical Corp, addresses a visitor's queries during the third China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Thursday.

WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY