

“ My heart was deeply touched when I looked at historical photos of comfort women. ... I hope the work will be a call for peace for humankind.”

Christian Poirot, French oil painter

## Prayers for safety



People have fun and pray for safety and luck during a *Taige* parade in Jialu village in Wuyuan, Jiangxi province, on Wednesday. *Taige* is a folk dance in which people carry characters from historical stories or tales and walk around the streets. It was listed as a national intangible cultural heritage in 2008. HU DUNHUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

## SOEs: 'Zombie' firms also improve

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on-year.

The government's goal for central SOEs of cutting 5.95 million metric tons of iron and steel overcapacity has been achieved ahead of schedule, while 23.88 million metric tons of coal overcapacity has been cut.

"A total of 2,041 'zombie companies' from 81 central SOEs have taken a turn for the better in their profits in the first half of this year. Their loss has been reduced by 88.5 billion yuan, compared with the same period of 2015," Shen said.

"Zombie companies" are economically unviable busi-

nesses, usually in industries with severe overcapacity, kept alive only with aid from the government and banks.

Shen said the government welcomes companies of all ownership types, as well as foreign companies, to participate in China's SOEs mixed-ownership reforms.

The commission is working on the third batch of SOE mixed-ownership reform pilot projects.

Up to now, 19 central SOEs in two batches have undergone mixed-ownership reforms in areas of power generation, oil and gas, railway and telecommunications. The number of

central SOEs also has been reduced from 102 in July to 98 this month.

"China is resorting to SOE mergers and acquisitions to create more global powerhouses with competitive edge and to further the supply-side structural reform," said Yu Xubo, president of COFCO Corp, the country's biggest agricultural products supplier by revenue.

The group plans to see 60 percent of its revenue contributed by overseas markets by 2020 and control up to 50 million metric tons of foreign grain resources to ensure China's food security.

# High-speed rail passengers can choose their own seats

### Flexibility includes offers of alternate 1-stop routes when nonstops sell out

By LUO WANGSHU  
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Passengers can now select their seats when buying tickets online for bullet trains — part of an effort to improve customer service, China Railway Corp said on Thursday.

When entering the ticket purchase page at 12306.cn or when using a smartphone app, passengers can choose a seat before submitting pay-

ment. If the preferred seat is not available, the system will automatically choose another.

The railway launched a pilot service in December allowing passengers to choose their own seats for the high-speed rail line that circles the island province of Hainan.

It also launched another online service that allows passengers to select alternate routes having one stop when tickets for a nonstop

trip are unavailable.

Further improvements will be made based on operations and passenger feedback.

Passengers can log on to 12306.cn, the official national railway website, to find out how to use both services. Foreign passengers will be able to use the service if they have an account on the website or app.

Liu Jiangbo, a Shaanxi native working in Beijing, is happy for the new service.

"I tested it on my smartphone as soon as I read the news," the 30-year-old said. "I always travel with my wife,

and sometimes the system gives us seats that are not together. We have to ask people on the train to change seats with us. But sometimes it's too much trouble and we just sit apart, as though we are traveling alone."

"Sometimes I cancel the order online, hoping to get tickets next to each other with the next order," Liu said. "But the next order sometimes turns out to be separate seats also. In the future I can choose where I want to sit on a bullet train, just like on an airplane."

## Painter captures pain of comfort women

NANJING — French oil painter Christian Poirot is visiting Nanjing, Jiangsu province, the city whose tragic wartime history inspired him to create a new series of works.

"Honestly, in the past, I knew nothing about the Nanjing Massacre or the history of forced comfort women during the Japanese invasion of China in World War II," the 56-year-old artist said. So-called comfort women were sex slaves for the Japanese military.

As he traveled through Nanjing several years ago, a friend told him that 300,000 Chinese people had been murdered after the city fell into Japanese hands. He was shocked, and

decided to express his feelings in a painting.

In December 2015, he donated a painting measuring 7.5 meters wide by 2.4 meters tall to the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders.

The painting depicts scenes of violence that occurred during the 1937-38 massacre, confronting viewers with the bloody ordeal suffered by the victims.

Poirot visited Nanjing again in September and worked out of a museum built on the former site of a "comfort women" station at Liji Lane in Nanjing to create a series of works based on those events. He made three paintings there.



Christian Poirot works on an oil painting in Nanjing.  
CUI XIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

In one painting, miserable-looking women wait for examination while the corpses of others are piled on the ground.

"My heart was deeply touched when I looked at historical photos of comfort women at the museum. Depicting the bitterness of their tortured

lives is my tribute to those women who still live with painful memories. I hope the work will be a call for peace for humankind," Poirot said.

He said he would continue the comfort women series after he returns to France.

Poirot plans to donate the paintings to the memorial hall before Dec 13 to coincide with the commemoration of China's national memorial day for victims in the massacre.

Poirot, who is well-known around the world for his oil paintings, was granted honorary citizenship of the city of Nanjing in 2015.

XINHUA

## Small and medium-sized enterprise fair draws eager participation of overseas players

By CAO YINGYING

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A brace of seminars and summits focusing on the key problems small and medium-sized enterprises face have attracted global officials, leading economists and entrepreneurs to exchange their views at the 14th China International Small and Medium Enterprise Fair.

The significant event is being held in Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province in southern China, beginning from Oct 10.

One of its highlights is an Asia-Europe Meeting seminar focusing on multi-dimensional support for financing SMEs.

ASEM is an organization established in 1996 to foster cooperation between the two continents — and facilitate international dialogue.

Its first summit was held in March 1996 in Bangkok, by European Union and ASEAN members, and the individual nations of China, Japan, and South Korea.

"SMEs have become a pillar for the economic development of Asian and European countries and are their most innovative and dynamic enterprise group," Zhang Feng, Party committee member and chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said at the seminar.

SMEs account for 99 percent of China's total number of enterprises. They contribute 60 percent to the nation's GDP, 50 percent of its tax revenues



Guangdong Vice-Governor Yuan Baocheng (third from right, front row) and Zhang Feng (fourth from right, front row), Party committee member and chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, talk to an exhibitor at the 14th China International Small and Medium Enterprise Fair. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The final contest of Maker China 2017 is held concurrently with the ongoing 14th China International Small and Medium Enterprise Fair.

and 80 percent of the total number of jobs.

To solve the difficulties in SME financing, China's government set up a 60 billion yuan (\$9.1 billion) development fund to support start-ups, Zhang said.

ASEM senior official Xie Bohua said that Asian and European countries faced increased challenges over financing after the international financial crisis.

"However, Asian and Euro-

pean SMEs have their own advantages and are complementary," Xie said.

"European countries have a relatively mature financial system, developed financial markets and advanced technology and management, while Asian countries have big market potential and growing innovative capabilities."

Liu Qiang, vice-president of the Bank of China, said that it had created a services model for SMEs and cross-border

SMEs and a special credit approval process responding to the risks and financing characteristics of SMEs.

Laura Egoli, consul-general of Italy in Guangzhou, said her government had set up increased funding for SMEs, especially those established by women and young entrepreneurs. In 2017, the government provided 45 million euros (\$53.4 million) to support SMEs.

Ma Xianghui, director general of the SME bureau under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said that to relieve the difficulties involved in SME financing, China would improve the laws governing SME development, promote cooperation between industry and finance, and promote the construction of a credit guarantee system for SMEs.

A total of 28 guests from China, Italy, Croatia, the Philippines, Thailand, Egypt, France, Indonesia and Malaysia shared their opinions at the summit.

More than 300 officials from

23 countries and representatives from financial institutions attended the seminar.

The China SME Summit is another highlight of the fair. Its aim is to organize and mobilize society to support micro, small and medium enterprises.

With the theme "new thinking, new motivation and new manufacturing," the summit invited Chinese and South Africa officials, leading economists and representatives of entrepreneurs to exchange views on measures and achievements in supporting SME development.

South Africa's Minister of Small Business Development, Lindiwe Zulu, said: "Many SMEs have pointed out that their growth and sustainability is hampered by a lack of access to markets in South Africa."

"We have made a commitment to facilitate market access for small businesses. Our participation at this year's (fair) indicates our practical effort to take this commitment forward."

Edith Vries, director general of South Africa's Department of Small Business Development, said that the vital significance of SMEs should be noted.

She added that the responsibility of policy makers to develop effective policies and measures, to improve the environment for SME development, should be emphasized.

Philippe Scholtes, managing director of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, said that SMEs needed technology, human capital, energy, quality production, industrial organization and a conducive business environment.

## Event seen creating a bridge to assist SMEs to go global

By CAO YINGYING

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The 14th China International Small and Medium Enterprise Fair, opening on Oct 10 in Guangzhou, has according to its organizers boosted partnerships and communications between global SMEs.

The annual fair — held in the Poly World Trade Center Expo in the capital of Guangdong province in southern China — aims to advance comprehensive strategic partnerships and promote the inclusive and sustainable development of SMEs in China and in other countries.

Zhang Feng, Party committee member and chief engineer of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, said the event was a bridge to help Chinese SMEs to go global and for foreign SMEs to access Chinese markets.

"With the new technology revolution and industry transformation, SMEs are facing new development opportunities," Zhang said.

Yuan Baocheng, vice-governor of Guangdong, said SMEs contributed significantly to the transformation and upgrading of Guangdong's industries.

"Guangdong will reduce the costs of managing companies, support the transformation of technology and promote the construction of services-oriented government, to provide a good developing environment for SMEs," Yuan said.

The massive fair is being hosted by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology — as well as the State Administration for

Industry and Commerce, the Guangdong government, the department of Small Business Development in South Africa and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Organizers said this year's event has attracted 6,282 exhibition stands for 2,925 global companies from South Africa, Egypt, India and more than 30 countries and regions, to display their products.

Serving as a co-host of the fair for the first time, South Africa has brought over more than 50 companies — covering services, agriculture, renewable energy, tourism, jewelry and the food sectors — to showcase the diverse nature of its economy.

Under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the BRICS cooperation mechanism, the joint hosting of the event is seen further promoting practical partnerships between China and South Africa in industry, trade and economics.

South Africa's Minister of Small Business Development, Lindiwe Zulu, said her country's participation in the fair was a tribute to its entrepreneurs who lobbied hard.

"It is a significant milestone in our collective journey towards building a nation of entrepreneurs," she added.



For more information about the fair, scan the QR code, call 8620-83137630, or log onto www.cismef.com.cn