

BUSINESS

Steel industry likely to be stable as recovery steady

Decline in demand for metal used in real estate sector may narrow this year

By OUYANG SHIJIA and LIU ZHIHUA

China's steel industry is forecast to maintain stability this year as the world's second-largest economy is on track for a steady recovery, said industry experts.

"China's steel demand will likely remain steady or report slight growth this year given the country's around 5 percent annual GDP growth target, the recovery in downstream demand, and the move to accelerate fixed-asset investment and promote large-scale equipment renewal and trade-in of consumer goods," said Zhang Longqiang, president of the China Metallurgical Information and Standardization Institute.

Zhang said the decline in demand for steel used in the real estate sector may narrow this year, as the country has doubled efforts to promote the construction of government-subsidized housing, build dual-use public infrastructure that can accommodate emergency needs and redevelop urban villages.

Zhang estimated that infrastructure investment will remain stable this year with a growth rate of at least 5 percent, suggesting a steady growth of steel demand for infrastructure construction.

"Demand for steel in energy and manufacturing industries will keep growing, especially in fields like wind and solar power, nuclear power, new energy vehicles, shipbuilding and marine engineering."

Zhang said the implementation of China's plan for driving large-scale equipment renewal and promoting trade-in deals for consumer goods is expected to create an additional over 14 million metric tons of annual steel demand. New urbanization will continue to promote steel buildings and the construction of "new infrastructure" will also boost steel demand, he said.



Masteel Group employees measure the temperature of a steelmaking furnace in Maanshan, Anhui province, in April. ZHANG MINGWEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that China's crude steel output fell 1.9 percent year-on-year to 257 million tons in the first quarter. Apparent consumption of crude steel decreased by 4.7 percent year-on-year to 232 million tons during the January-March period, said the China Iron and Steel Association.

Jiang Wei, vice-president of the association, attributed the notable decline in apparent consumption of crude steel to factors like the lack of

effective downstream demand and a slow demand recovery after the Spring Festival holiday.

"The steel industry still faces challenges like temporary severe imbalances in supply and demand, notable declines in steel prices and rising iron ore prices," he said.

Facing pressures from challenging market situations, the steel industry has been actively accelerating the cultivation of new quality productive forces, and promoting high-end,

intelligent and green transition.

Jiang said the demand for steel used in the manufacturing sector has grown over the years, with the sector accounting for 48 percent of the overall steel demand in 2023, up from 42 percent in 2020.

"The steel industry has significantly accelerated the adjustment of its product structure, in a bid to meet the increasing demand for steel used in the manufacturing sector, including fields like automo-

biles, ships and household appliances," Jiang said.

According to a survey by the association, 40 percent of surveyed steel enterprises have applied three-dimensional visual simulation technology on major production lines, 79.6 percent have piloted big data models, and 18.4 percent have already deployed partial applications of artificial intelligence. As of April 23, some 136 steel companies completed or partially completed

ultra-low emission transformation and assessment monitoring.

Despite challenges ahead, the steel industry will focus on opportunities from rising demand in sectors like manufacturing and energy, Jiang said.

"More efforts should be made to adjust and optimize the offerings and create more high-value items."

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By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shenzhen Design Week, which wrapped up on May 6, vibrantly showcased the city's ongoing effort to rebrand itself within the culture and fashion scene, according to local officials.

With the theme "Design for a Better Life", the event kicked off on April 27, featuring a wide range of cultural activities and exhibitions. Besides the opening ceremony, the City of Design Roundtable Dialogue and the World Designers Congress, the Kumpeng Global Design Award ceremony and award-winning works' exhibition were held, along with a series of brand promotion events.

Representatives from the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and the International Council of Design, and industrial insiders from Asia, North America, Europe, as well as representatives from Hong Kong, Macao, designers from cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Chongqing, and experts and scholars from domestic design schools, were invited to the event.

Rebranding city's role

Shenzhen in South China's Guangdong province is known as one of the country's primary tech hubs. In 2023, the city government released a three-year action plan with the goal of building itself into a "City of Design". In the inaugural year of that action plan and the seventh year since the establishment of Shenzhen Design Week, Shenzhen revamped the positioning and operation of its design week event to create a multilayered exhibition and communication platform.

In the new context, more than 20 series of branded events, including the fashion week events and other key innovative design activities throughout the year, are organized under the Shenzhen Design Week framework and serve as an experiential platform for urban management and improving residents' quality of life.

The just-concluded Design Week advocated the fusion of design and creative industries, and utilized various forms of creative design activities to promote Shenzhen's industrial development. During the roundtable dialogue, a special segment was organized to facilitate design industry exchanges among global design



The City of Design Roundtable Dialogue is held during the 2024 Shenzhen Design Week event. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Design and fashion take center stage in Shenzhen to showcase local culture

organizations, institutions, businesses and schools, catalyzing collaboration and innovation in the global design sector.

Subactivities of the Design Week were organized throughout the city, with each having its own features. One major highlight came from the design work of *Dream Wings*, which was exhibited at the Rail In shopping mall. The Shenzhen city image film *Leading the Way*, which premiered at the opening ceremony of the Design Week, has become a sensation. Consisting of more than 700 components in its intricate structure, the work embodies a tangible expression of the spirit of Shenzhen.

An international typography design exhibition, another representative activity affiliated with the Design Week, was held at the Nantou Ancient Town in the city. It showcased a respected attitude to the long-standing Chinese characters and allowed visitors to explore the potential of future design.



A major piece of art embodying the Shenzhen spirit is exhibited during the design week event.

Many young students came to the exhibition, among them one surnamed Lu, a sophomore from Guangzhou. "We are very interested in design. We heard the activities of the Shenzhen Design Week are particularly rich, so we finally came during the May Day holiday to see this horizon-broadening event," said Lu. The Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Macao

Digital Creative Design Exhibition also attracted a large number of visitors with its imaginative design, interactive experiences and strong visual impact. A female visitor described the exhibition as "refreshing, as some traditional cultural elements became more vivid and interesting through digital technology. It was delightful to see so many

cutting-edge works in Shenzhen that were aligned with new media trends."

In addition, several exhibition areas in Shekou, Overseas Chinese Town and Nanshan Museum have attracted many local visits with diverse traditional craftsmanship revival projects, contemporary art, and light and shadow design.

Appealing award and works

On April 27, the Shenzhen Global Design Awards, known as the Kumpeng Global Design Award, were handed out after evaluating about 5,000 entries from 18 countries and regions. After a professional evaluation by 25 international and domestic judges, a total of 331 award-winning works were selected in the five major design categories of urban design, industrial design, fashion design, digital design, and communication design, with total prize money of 5 million yuan (\$691,970). Zhang Ling, head of the city's com-

munication department, said this year marks the 16th year since Shenzhen was awarded the title of "City of Design" by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, and noted the Kumpeng award emphasizes respecting traditional culture and drawing design inspiration from the long history of civilization and distinctive local culture. "In Shenzhen, every creative idea will be respected. Shenzhen will create a better environment for the design industry and promote the commercialization of award-winning works," said Zhang.

As a core component of the Shenzhen Design Week, the award was supported by the organizing committee of the Shenzhen Design Week and administrated by the Shenzhen Innovation and Creative Design Development Office.

This year's gold award winner in fashion design is the *Dragon Flight* brooch designed by Shenzhen Yinghe Taifu Jewelry. The brooch integrates poetry, painting and Chinese philosophy, evoking thoughts and nostalgia with its romantic and aesthetic design. Its lead designer, jewelry artist Wu Fenghua, said the inspiration for the piece came from a line in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) poem *Spring River in Flower Moon Night*. The core design concept aims to express the ultimate life ideal of transforming like a fish into a dragon and benefiting the world.

Ni Qiaobo, a project officer of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and UNESCO Cities Platform, said Shenzhen is the first city in China to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. With the successful organization of the Shenzhen Design Week accompanied by many other activities, Ni said Shenzhen plays a leading role and has achieved significant accomplishments regarding tech-driven development and innovation. It is also gaining increasing recognition internationally.

Alessandro Antonicelli, a design teacher from Italy, said the Shenzhen Design Week was very important for the creation of design culture in the city because it provides a platform for people to think and learn more about design, while Dhruv Bharat Shah from Kenya said: "I learned different concepts of design and what design means to my peers in different industries. And that makes a big difference to someone like me who's not a design student."