

## SPOTLIGHT

## New Year, New Vision: Ningbo Companies Look Ahead

By Zhao Yu

As the 15th Five-Year Plan period begins, private enterprises in Ningbo are mapping out strategies to drive innovation and growth. How these businesses evolve and what new initiatives they launch will shape the city's economic outlook in the year ahead?

## Tackling Technical Challenges in New Energy Vehicles

The electric drive system is a core power component in electric vehicles. During high-speed operation, the system generates heat and expands, leading to a buildup of internal air pressure. If the pressure cannot be released in time, the housing may deform or crack. Simply adding ventilation openings would not work. Rainwater and dust can enter through the openings, while internal oil mist may leak out, potentially damaging precision components and creating environmental hazards.

Balancing pressure relief with water and oil-resistance has long posed a technical challenge for the industry. Zhang Li, general manager of Ningbo Konojia New Materials Co., Ltd., said the key lies not in the valve housing itself but in the membrane material inside it.

"The air valve is just the housing. The real performance depends on the membrane," Zhang said, noting that the real solution involves developing waterproof, breathable and oil-resistant membrane materials.

To address the issue, the company built its own simulation platform to test and refine the materials. The research and development process lasted more than a year and involved over 1,300 experiments. "There are no shortcuts in materials science. Progress requires continuous testing and improvement," Zhang said.

The oil- and water-re-



Ningbo Yongxin Optics Co., Ltd. (Novel Optics) . [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

sistant breather valve developed by the company is installed on the electric drive housing to regulate internal pressure while preventing contamination.

Last year, the company reported steady growth in both domestic and overseas markets. Domestic sales rose 20% year-on-year, while overseas orders increased 10%, strengthening its position in the specialized components segment.

## Scaling Heritage Snacks Through Artisan Collaboration

Yang Lin, chairman and founder of Yong's Gourmet, recalled that his company began eight years ago as a humble five-square-meter store staffed by three people. At the time, the catering sector was already highly competitive. Yang said that excessive price-based competition can exhaust businesses and undermine employee confidence.

He believes a company's long-term development depends on clearly defining its positioning — identifying what sustains the business and what it aims to become.

Yang chose to focus on the niche segment of local

snacks. In his view, many of Ningbo's traditional flavors have endured for generations because of their ingredients and craftsmanship, while also carrying strong cultural associations and emotional resonance for consumers.

"We are responding to consumers' attachment to hometown flavors and traditional culture," Yang said.

In 2021, the company launched the "10,000 Artisans Common Prosperity Plan", partnering directly with veteran cooks and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage skills. Under the program, artisans contribute their original recipes and production techniques, while the company provides branding, standardized production, packaging design and nationwide distribution. The model allows the preparation techniques of traditional foods to be scaled up for the mass market while preserving their authentic flavors.

Yang noted that while many food companies have access to capital and technology, they often lack traditional recipes and expertise. Skilled artisans, by contrast, possess techniques and formulas but may lack branding, marketing channels and operational sup-

port.

"Yong's Gourmet functions as a bridge between the two," Yang said, adding that the company works to connect artisans with market resources and provide a structured pathway for the commercialization and preservation of heritage food products.

Over the past year, the company expanded to more than 400 stores nationwide, with annual retail sales surpassing 1 billion yuan.

## Going All In on AI

On the desk sits a stack of books about AI. "I plan to do a quiet retreat in Ninghai over Chinese New Year to work through these," said Chen Jianxun, chairman of Ningbo Quanmao Information Technology Co., Ltd.

The Ningbo-based company, which serves 750,000 import and export companies across China, is embracing artificial intelligence to transform how businesses reach overseas markets. At the center of this effort is BOND—Quanmao Information's independently developed "Super Foreign Trade AI Agent".

"You just tell it what product you have and the type

of clients you want to reach, and it handles the rest," Chen explained. "It finds potential buyers and even helps with establishing initial contact."

The system works by first sending out emails to gauge client interest. Once a reply is received, the AI continues the conversation via texting. Only when a client expresses a clear procurement intention is the interaction passed to a human salesperson. "The AI manages all the early-stage screening and outreach," Chen said.

BOND's efficiency comes from its ability to attract digital traffic effectively. "A growing share of search traffic now comes through AI platforms—Google, GPT, DeepSeek, Gemini, and others. If your business doesn't appear in AI-generated results, clients simply won't find you," Chen noted.

In this new landscape, traditional search engine optimization (SEO) is giving way to what Chen calls GEO—Generative Engine Optimization.

Early adopters are seeing results. Chen Jing of Changshu Bealead Automatic Machine Co., Ltd. said, "With the AI-driven system, we have connected with a large number of overseas clients we would not have reached otherwise." 开放

## Rising High-Value Firms Drive Ningbo's Market Growth

By Lu Xinyan

As the new year begins, Ningbo's total number of market entities continues to expand, with a growing number of high-value enterprises joining the city's economy.

Data released by the city's market supervision authority show that in January, newly registered market entities maintained steady growth in both scale and quality. The total number of new market entities rose 6.68% year-on-year, while new enterprise registrations increased 14.96%, signaling sustained business vitality.

A notable trend is the rise of companies with substantial registered capital, reflecting improvements in the quality and efficiency of Ningbo's market entities. In January, 61 newly established companies each had registered capital exceeding 50 million yuan, a 90.6% increase from the previous year. Among them, 28 firms had registered capital over 100 million yuan, up 75% year-on-year. These high-potential enterprises are strengthening the city's industrial upgrading and becoming new growth drivers.

Market entities form the micro-economic foundation of a sustained economic recovery. Over recent years, Ningbo has streamlined market entry and exit procedures, reduced institutional costs, and introduced policies to support enterprise growth. These efforts have encouraged innovation and investment while improving the overall quality of new market participants.

A notable newcomer is Ningbo Yuxing Aerospace Technology Co., Ltd., registered in Yuyao in January. Headquartered in Beijing, the company provides full life-cycle services for commercial satellites, including tracking, refueling, and space debris management. "We serve as a 'space steward' for commercial satellites," said general manager Dong Wei. The company combines R&D in Beijing with manufacturing and operations in Ningbo, taking advantage of the city's industrial base, supply chains, and talent pool. Yuxing plans to launch a remote-sensing satellite data sharing platform to help local businesses access space data more easily.

In January, new market entities in Ningbo registered a total capital of 30.97 billion yuan, with 23.36 billion yuan (75.4%) contributed by investors from outside the city. These large-scale entrants bring capital, technology, skilled professionals, and higher value-added industrial resources, further strengthening Ningbo's economic landscape.

The city's efforts to attract capital, technology, and talent are paying off. As of the end of January, Ningbo is home to 1.456 million market entities, including 615,000 registered enterprises, up 4.57% from a year earlier, reinforcing the city's position as a growing hub for promising companies.

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## Ningbo Art Museum Show Bridges Cézanne and Modern Chinese Painting

By Jin Lu

Two original works by Paul Cézanne have gone on display in Ningbo for the first time, anchoring a new exhibition at the Ningbo Art Museum that explores the modernity of Chinese painting through cross-cultural dialogue.

Titled "Tribute to Cézanne: The Modernity of Chinese Paintings", the exhibition opened on Feb 12 and features nearly 100 works, including Cézanne's early oils from the 1860s —

Landscape at Midday (c. 1865) and Landscape (c. 1866). Part of the museum's collection, they reveal the artist's early exploration of color, texture and structure, which later earned him recognition as a pioneer of modern painting.

Curated by Xia Kejun, a professor at Renmin University of China, the exhibition centers on the idea of the "unfinished Cézanne". Xia explains that Cézanne's late experiments—blending the transparency of watercolor with the solidity of oil—re-

main unresolved, inviting reinterpretation. Seventeen contemporary Chinese artists engaged with this concept using traditional ink painting, exploring new directions for a distinctly Chinese approach to modernity in art.

The exhibition creates a fascinating dialogue between the past and the present, highlighting both the museum's collection and the ongoing evolution of Chinese artistic expression. It runs through March 8 and was free to the public during the Chinese New Year holiday.



Visitors attend the exhibition. [Photo provided to Ningbo Times]

