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Promotion of satellite exports urged

By ZHAO LEI
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The Chinese government should promote the export of commercial satellites and help domestic enterprises secure a larger share of the growing space market, a national lawmaker said.

Professor Zhang Tao, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress, said commercial space has become a strategic arena in global competition. In addition to major space powers, an increasing number of countries and regions are developing policies to build their own space industries, while private investors are increasingly engaging in space businesses.

"Specifically speaking, the global satellite industry is rapidly expanding. The demand for satellite-enabled services continues to rise steadily in many countries. This is providing a very good opportunity for Chinese commercial space enterprises to establish their presence in the international market," Zhang told China Daily in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the fourth session of the 14th NPC, which concluded in Bei-

jing on Thursday.

Zhang, who teaches at the School of Materials Science and Engineering at Beihang University — formerly known as Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics — is an active advocate for China's commercial space sector, often calling for more attention and support for the industry.

"Our country has strong manufacturing capacity and a comprehensive industrial system. Chinese commercial space enterprises can leverage our manufacturing advantages, technological innovation and international cooperation to gain competitive edges," Zhang said.

"Relevant government departments should encourage and facilitate the export of various types of satellites to meet diverse market demand. In particular, the export of low-Earth orbit satellites — which have broad applications in science and technology, educational activities and other sectors — should be prioritized when it comes to government reviews and approvals so that we can further promote Chinese space technology and standards," he added.

The professor proposed that the government use favorable policies to foster satellite exports to countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, noting they have a strong demand for cost-effective satellite services to offset limited space capabilities and a significant digital divide.

He also suggested authorities should help enterprises better understand related policies so that favorable measures could yield the best results.

Currently, all of China's exported satellites have been designed and built by State-owned entities, such as China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp and the Shanghai Engineering Center for Microsatellites.

Leading private satellite companies, including GalaxySpace, are exploring ways to promote their satellites and services internationally. GalaxySpace has partnered with Mahanakorn University of Technology in Thailand to establish a ground test station in the Southeast Asian nation and conduct experimental verification of a low-Earth orbit broadband internet network.

China plans to upgrade Beidou navigation system to enhance its accuracy and services

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China will soon begin upgrading its Beidou Navigation Satellite System to enhance the network's overall capabilities and service, according to the China Satellite Navigation Office.

The office said in a news release on Friday that during the in-orbit upgrade operations, engineers and controllers will optimize the working status of some satellites and will also strengthen monitoring and maintenance of the network to make sure that users will not be affected by the move.

The Beidou system currently has 50 satellites in orbit. Its spatial signal accuracy is better than two meters; the global positioning accuracy exceeds 10 meters; the velocity measurement accuracy is

better than 20 centimeters per second; and timing errors are less than 20 nanoseconds.

Through the precise point positioning service signal, Beidou can achieve horizontal positioning accuracy better than 0.3 meters and vertical positioning accuracy better than 0.6 meters, according to the office.

Beidou is one of China's largest civilian satellite systems and also one of the four global navigation networks, alongside the United States' GPS, Russia's GLONASS, and the European Union's Galileo.

Since 2000, 64 Beidou satellites, including four experimental ones, have been launched on 47 Long March 3 series rockets from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province. The system was declared complete in July 2020 before providing full-scale global services.

According to the most recent statistics from the Global Navigation Satellite System and Location-Based Services Association of China, the overall value of satellite-enabled navigation and positioning services in China reached about 576 billion yuan (\$83 billion) by the end of 2024, a 7.39 percent year-on-year increase. The combined output of chips, equipment, software, data and infrastructure totaled 170 billion yuan that year.

System planners have announced that research and development for the next generation of Beidou is underway.

The new version will be "omni-present, smarter and more integrated", and upon its completion in 2035, Beidou services will cover not only land and sea, but also the sky; outer space and deep oceans, according to planners.