

New city established on Yongxing Island

By XINHUA and CHINA DAILY

China on Tuesday established the city of Sansha on Yongxing Island in the southernmost province of Hainan.

Sun Shaochi, vice-minister of civil affairs, announced the State Council's approval of the establishment of the city at a ceremony.

Luo Baoming, Party chief of Hainan province, said in a keynote speech that Sansha was established to administer the Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha islands and their surrounding waters in the South China Sea.

"The provincial government will be devoted to turning the city into an important base to safeguard China's sovereignty and serve marine resource development," he said.

He said the main task now is to build up political power in Sansha to ensure efficient administration.

A ceremony to mark the city's establishment began on Tuesday morning in a square in front of the city government's main building, located on Yongxing Island, a part of the Xisha Islands and the largest island in the area.

The national flag was hoisted while the national anthem played after the signboards of the Sansha city's government and the city's committee of the Communist Party of China were unveiled.

A military garrison was also established on Tuesday in the city.

Xiao Jie was elected on Monday the first mayor of the newly established city in the first session of the Sansha People's Congress held on



A ceremony to mark Sansha city's establishment takes place on Tuesday morning on a square in front of the city government's main building on Yongxing Island, a part of the Xisha Islands.

HUANG YIMING / CHINA DAILY

Yongxing Island.

Xiao, 51, was head of the Hainan Provincial Agriculture Department.

Fu Zhuang, 56, former deputy director of the Hainan Provincial Civil Air Defense Office, was elected director of the Sansha People's Congress Standing Committee, the city's

legislative body.

The legislative conference also elected three deputy mayors, head of the city's intermediate people's court and head of the city's procuratorate, or prosecuting office. It also elected another five members of the Sansha People's Congress Standing Committee.

"It's a great honor to be the first mayor of Sansha, and it's also a brand new mission, challenge and test for me," said Xiao.

The first Sansha government will be devoted to administrative management, economic development, people's livelihoods and environmental protection in the coming five years,

Xiao said.

The deputies to the legislative body should make positive contributions to the management, development and protection of the islands as well as the sea waters surrounding Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha, said Fu. Forty-five deputies to the

Sansha People's Congress attended the session and cast their votes. The deputies were elected by about 1,100 residents from the Xisha, Nansha and Zhongsha islands on Saturday.

The State Council in June approved the establishment of Sansha, a prefecture-level city in Hainan province.

Living on marine time

Editor's note: China Daily reporter Huang Yiming visits Yongxing Island, part of the Xisha Islands in the South China Sea, to observe the establishment of Sansha city, the smallest prefecture-level city in China in land area and population. Residents talked about their lives on the small island.



Liang Shaoqun, director of the fishery bureau

Fifty-nine-year-old Liang Shaoqun, director of the Xisha Islands fishery bureau, has worked on Yongxing since 1975.

At first, he was a film projectionist. He typically could get only a few films from the supply ship, which would then be shown for a long time.

But islanders enjoyed watching those films despite the limited number of films and poor screening equipment because there was no other entertainment, Liang remembered.

Life was very hard because of a shortage of supplies when Liang started working on the island. "Fresh vegetables kept for only two days, and we had to eat other vegetables like pumpkin which could be stored for a longer time," Liang said.

Drinking water was a big problem. Islanders relied on rainwater that had been collected for drinking. Liang remembered that during that time two people conducting research on the island became ill after drinking the water.

When the supply ship was delayed getting to the island because of a typhoon, people had to eat fruits as their main food, so the arrival of supply ship was very important to residents and soldiers, Liang said.

Liang met his wife and got married on the island. He said he was thrilled to see the establishment of Sansha city on Yongxing Island, before his retirement. He will retire next year.



Wu Qingzhi, head of a marine animal protection station as well as a cultural relics agency

Wu Qingzhi is a senior resident of the Xisha Islands. In 1978, 20-year-old Wu spent 17 hours in a boat to reach Yongxing Island. During his 34 years on the island, he has worked as loader, film projectionist and director of a culture center.

Now he is head of a marine animal protection station and a cultural relics agency in Sansha. He has extensively studied the creatures of South, North and West islands of the Xishas. During the sea turtle ovulation period, Wu and his colleagues' main task is to protect the creatures and other marine animals. They have to educate fishermen not to fish during the ovulation period.

"When I first came to the island, residents had little awareness of animal protection. After our teaching and communication, they accepted the concept," Wu said.

Wu experienced hardships in the Xishas, especially supply shortages and his isolation from his family on Hainan Island. He could not go home when his grandmother and father died. His two daughters live on Hainan Island because they could not receive a good education where Wu and his wife work on Yongxing.

Wu said he is happy to have witnessed the development of Yongxing in his 34 years living there.



Mai Sanqing, director of the post and telecommunication office

Residents of Yongxing Island call the *Qiongsa No 3*, the island's only supply ship, a "ship of lives".

The vessel is also the main means of transportation to and from the island.

Every 15 to 20 days, it carries drinking water, vegetables, fruit, meat and other daily necessities to the island.

The trip from Hainan Island usually takes 15 hours.

For Mai Sanqing, the director of the post and telecommunication office in Sansha city, the supply ship's arrival is critical for his job. "Tourists to Yongxing Island like to send post cards and letters to friends and residents here also get many letters. We rely on the supply ship to deliver them and the delivery date is usually uncertain," Mai said.

Sometimes it takes only several days, but when the supply ship runs into bad weather, such as typhoons, and cannot reach the island, it can take up to two months to send mail.

"Now, it's convenient on the island to surf the Internet, and more residents like shopping online, which also increases our workload when they receive goods," Mai said.

The post office, the southernmost one in China, is on Beijing Road, the main road on Yongxing Island.



A DAY OF LEISURE

PHOTO BY HUANG YIMING / CHINA DAILY

Zheng Ju (front), her child and husband relax in Yongxing village on Yongxing Island of Sansha city, Hainan province, on Saturday. Zheng has lived in the village for more than 20 years.



Chen Hui, boss of a cafe

The only private business on the island, Feiyujun Cafe and Teahouse, was opened by Chen Hui, a woman from Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

In 2003, Chen was stuck on the island for a month because of bad weather. During that time, she planned to open a cafe bookstore as a rest place for visitors to the island. Her dream came true in 2008. But it is not as easy to operate the shop as Chen thought. It's difficult on the small island.

In the beginning, all the materials had to be brought in from outside. When a typhoon came, the supply ship's deliveries take longer. Because there is no transportation worker on

the island, Chen has to carry the goods herself to the shop. Another problem is that there are not many tourists. And it's hard to find waiters.

"I am prepared for a possible loss," she said.

In 2009, Chen and other island residents set up a maritime environment protection association. The association had launched lots of activities in environmental protection with the cooperation of the local government and military departments. Chen also started making wooden trash bins, which now can be found all over the island.

Fu Zaichou (below) and Huang Liangshan, from fishermen's village



On Yongxing Island, fisherman Huang Liangshan at Yongxing village operates a restaurant that specializes in local seafood. He began fishing near the island in 1999 and has become a large supplier of seafood on the island.

Yongxing is the island's only village. It has a population of 159 and 38 fishing vessels, said Fu Zaichou, the village head.

Most of the villagers are from Dongjiao township in Wenchang, Hainan province. Some have lived on the island for more than 20 years, Fu said.

Many young people from Hainan Island have appeared in the village during the summer vacation. A 6-year-old girl named Fu Wendie, from Wenchang, came to the village to visit her parents and relatives. Her parents, Fu Dizhao and Zhu Yan, earn their living fishing on the island.

The girl's parents enjoy life in Yongxing and hope to permanently live there after the establishment of Sansha city, they said.

REPORTER'S LOG | HUANG YIMING

Modern world catches up with village life

This is my second trip to Yongxing Island. In 1991, when I came for a display before Aug 1, Army Day, the main buildings were only a port and a military hotel.

Soldiers told me daily necessities were in short supply and it took a very long time to send and receive letters from their families.

This time, the island, part of the Xisha Islands, left a completely different impression on me.

On Beijing Road, the main road on Yongxing Island, I found more buildings in the newly established city.

The coconut trees were neatly planted along the sides of the road. The island's central area is very similar to other small cities in China. Only the sound of the sea reminded me that I was on the Xisha Islands.

In 1991, it took an hour to travel around the whole island, which had few residents. Now about 38 households live on Yongxing.

People use greenhouses to

I could find many young people in the streets. They are just like young people in any other city of China. They use iPads and iPhones and at night they go to cafes and bars.

plant vegetables and have pig and duck farms. One resident told me that daily supplies are no longer a problem. The only concern is the long periods of bad weather.

Some people have brought farming vehicles from Hainan Island and the local government has helped install electricity facilities and TV sets.

Many senior citizens expressed their feeling for the remarkable changes in this small city.

Hu Yaxiong, director of Sansha Hospital, told me that 10 years ago the medical services were at a very low level. Now a new hospital building is being constructed and is expected to begin operation at the end of the year.

I could find many young people in the streets. They are just like young people in any other city of China. They use iPads and iPhones and at night they go to cafes and bars. The nightlife reminded me that 21 years ago, our performance for those soldiers on the island was their only entertainment.

A soldier told me a sad love story in 1991. He lost his girlfriend because he received her love letter several months late as the bad weather made communications very hard. Now residents on the island can enjoy easy access to the Internet and telecommunication services.

Water and electricity supplies are also beyond my expectations. The standby battery and computer in my bag became unnecessary.

Xisha Islands, as well as Zhongsha and Nansha islands, have plenty of tourism resources and Sansha city has huge potential for tourism.

From my two visits to Xisha Islands, I believe that the residents in Sansha will have a better life with its fast development.

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