



The coastal city of Zhanjiang has been designated a pivot city in the nation's 21st-Century Marine Silk Road initiative, which will bring many opportunities, said Mayor Wang Zhongbing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Mayor confident of bright future awaiting Zhanjiang

Coastal city focuses on innovation to balance lifestyle and economic growth

By TRACIE BARRETT and HU ZHE

Zhanjiang mayor Wang Zhongbing has confidence in a bright future for the coastal city in Guangdong province, as the local government works with residents to improve living conditions and strengthen the city's economic power.

While in Beijing to attend the annual two sessions, Wang took time out to explain Zhanjiang's current and future development plans as the national economy enters the "new normal", the term used by President Xi Jinping in reference to economic conditions in China that differ from the former high-growth period.

"During past times, the Chinese economy was stimulated by tremendous investment," Wang said, "but that time has passed. Now we have to find a new engine for the development of our national economy. That new engine is mass entrepreneurship and innovation."

The mayor said that as China goes into a new stage of social and economic development, Zhanjiang will build its own innovation-driven style of development. "That is the philosophy and focus of the local government," he said.

As part of a southern "maritime valley" the city is establishing, it will focus on creating a cluster of six major industries — steel-making, petrochemicals refining, paper-making, home appliance manufacturing, biopharmaceuticals and aquatic products.

"This cluster of industries will push forward the Zhanjiang development," Wang said.

The city will also expand cooperation among the government, businesses and aca-



During an exclusive interview with China Daily, Zhanjiang Mayor Wang Zhongbing said the city is on the track of "new normal" growth, focusing on balanced development of the economy, the environment and people's living conditions.

democratic institutions as a high-value engine for what Wang described as the high-tech valley.

"In the past, college research results only stayed on paper, not in practice," Wang said, speaking fluent English. "Now we will deepen the relationship among the government, industry and colleges to put the research results into the companies, to make money and make mutual benefits."

As part of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which refers to the New Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road, Zhanjiang has been designated a pivot city on the maritime route. Wang said this designa-

tion creates huge potential for the development of the city's economy.

'Many opportunities'

"One belt, one road will give us many opportunities."

Zhanjiang, with a population of more than 8 million people, has rich forest, land and maritime resources, particularly its deepwater harbor, which the mayor described as "the shortest route to the world from China."

"The harbor is a very important infrastructure of the city," he said.

The throughput capacity of Zhanjiang Port exceeded 200 million metric tons in 2014 and Wang said that capacity would increase in the future.

"Opening wider to the outside world will create more favorable conditions to adopt the new normal of the economy."

"In the next three or four years, the throughput of the harbor will reach 300 million tons and go into the top 10 national harbors," he said.

One reason for the port's achievement is the signal given to other companies by the current construction of major facilities for Baosteel, China's largest steel company, and Sinopec, Asia's largest petrochemicals refiner.

Wang said the two are "giant projects", with total investment of more than 20 billion yuan (\$3.2 billion). The local government is working with the companies and the local people, he said, "to make the best balance between economic development and environmental protection."

Both projects will increase the economic and competitive power of the city, Wang said, "but environmental protection is the most important for our local people."

'Footprint City'

In keeping with that environmental awareness, Zhanjiang has also formulated the concept of a "Footprint City", with a focus on the rights and enjoyment of residents and visitors.

"The core of a city is the people," Wang said.

The concept focuses on respecting nature and the ecosystem, while creating comfortable living and leisure conditions.

One part of this would involve the creation of "life-enhancing streets", where people "can sit in chairs, can stop and talk, not only walking, not only running but also enjoying the life of the city and having time to talk with each other."

"We will build long green walking corridors, greenways, for pedestrians, so the city has suitable and comfortable living conditions for residents, not only for cars."

The mayor's energy and enthusiasm were obvious as he spoke of his expectations for his city's future.

"Zhanjiang is a large and beautiful city, for traveling, for living and working," he said.

"Almost 30 years have passed since Zhanjiang opened to the world in 1984. Now Zhanjiang will turn a new page, a new page for living conditions improving, for industries, for entrepreneurship, also a new page for the success of local people, every person, including men, women, the young and old.

"We don't only want everyone to share in the success of our city, we want everyone to contribute to our city's success. A bright future is ours to write. Let's begin this new page, let's start right now."

"We will unite together toward the same target, to improve our living conditions and strengthen our economic power. Our city is brighter and brighter. We have confidence in our future."

Sugar group building new trading center

BY QIU QUANLIN
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Guangdong Jinling Sugar Industry Group, one of the leading sugar makers in the country, has launched construction of a three-phase trading center for agricultural products to facilitate trade between China and Southeast Asian countries.

The Beibu Gulf Agriculture Products Trading Center, located in Suixi county in Zhanjiang, in western Guangdong province, will go into operation by 2017, according to Lin Shuixi, founder and chairman of the Guangdong Jinling Sugar Industry Group.

"The trading center will help boost the efficiency of transporting agricultural products to the domestic and overseas markets, especially in Southeast Asian countries," Lin said.

In the past, Zhanjiang, a city with abundant agricultural resources, faced difficulties in transporting its agricultural products to other parts of the country, not to mention the overseas market, Lin said.

Under a strategy launched by the Zhanjiang city government to speed up transport network development for agricultural products, construction of the first phase of the trading center began in 2013.

Lin said operation of the first phase of the project began after construction was completed in early February.

The three phases will cost up to 1.6 billion yuan (\$255.5 million), Lin said.

The annual throughput of the trading platform is expected to reach 3 million metric tons of agricultural products, generating more than 40 million yuan in tax revenue and creating more than 2,000 jobs, sources within the company said.

"The modernization of the traditional agriculture industry will play a part to drive the city's development in the years ahead," Lin said.

Lin, who is a deputy of the National People's Congress, was speaking to China Daily during the ongoing NPC session in Beijing.

"Zhanjiang, which enjoys a tropical climate, has the potential to develop agriculture into a major industry for the city's economic development in the near future," he said.

According to Lin, the trading center would also provide local farmers with a trustworthy wholesale market, facilitating the exchange of agricultural products between the country's southern and northern areas.

"It will develop into a transport center for agricultural products made from the Beibu



Lin Shuixi calls for large-scale concentrated farming to lower costs in sugarcane production.

Gulf area, which includes the western part of Guangdong and the eastern part of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region."

Lin said the trading center would help sustain business growth for the Jinling Group, which faces the challenges of rising sugar production costs and a lower domestic sugar price.

"Under the current situation, we can't use mechanized measures in raw sugarcane production, which in turn increased our sugar production costs," Lin said.

He said the rate of mechanized sugarcane production in China is currently less than 20 percent, which has resulted in rising labor costs.

"As a result, we had to import raw sugarcane from overseas countries such as Thailand, to offset the rising labor costs," Lin said.

Another factor — the low sugar price — is driven by the overproduction and oversupply of imported sugar, Lin said.

"The government should have a quota for sugar imports and buy up the surplus to keep the industrial profitable," he said.

At a panel discussion during the NPC session, Lin called for more use of large-scale concentrated farming in raw sugarcane production.

"Concentrated farming and mechanized production would help reduce sugar production costs," Lin said.

The Jinling Group sold more than 400,000 tons of sugar and generated sales revenue of 3 billion yuan in 2014.

"It's been tough years for most domestic sugar producers, who failed to make profits because of the low sugar price and increased production costs," Lin said.

The company plans to invest more in technology innovations to upgrade its processing facilities in the coming years.

"We will produce high-end sugar to enter the European market," Lin said.

Jinling's exports of sugar currently represent about 10 percent of its total sales.



Cargo throughput at Zhanjiang Port exceeded 200 million metric tons in 2014, ranking first of all the ports along the Beibu Gulf coast.