



Relying on its geographical advantages and resources, Zhanjiang is opening up its economy in cooperation with overseas markets. PENG CHANGQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Coastal city in Guangdong province looks to deepen economic, shipping, tourism links with neighbors

By CHEN HONG
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Zhanjiang in Guangdong province will establish wider connections with nearby cities and overseas markets to help its economy thrive, according to the city's top officials.

"We highlight the new development strategy of innovation, coordination, environmental protection, opening and sharing to make the city a new economic drive of the province," said Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang.

The coastal city has the eighth largest economy of the 21 cities in Guangdong, with its GDP reaching 279 billion yuan (\$44.2 billion) in 2017, representing year-on-year growth of 8 percent.

The city's Mayor Jiang Jianjun said: "We will fully exert Zhanjiang's geographical advantages and fully tap domestic and overseas markets and resources, to upgrade the city's opening-up to reach a bigger scale, a wider variety of sectors and a higher level."

A deputy to the 13th National People's Congress, Jiang made the remarks during the annual session of the legislative body in Beijing, which is scheduled

to end on March 20. Zhanjiang is located at a strategic position where the provinces of Guangdong and Hainan, as well as the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region meet.

Domestically, Zhanjiang aims to become more closely linked with the well-developed cities of Guangdong province, such as Shenzhen, Foshan and Zhuhai, by setting up industrial cooperation zones, the mayor said.

As a part of the Beibu Gulf, which is encircled by the Leizhou Peninsula — where Zhanjiang is located — Hainan island, Guangxi and Vietnam, the city is seeking greater economic collaboration with its neighbors.

The city authorities have worked with other cities in the gulf to map out the area's over-all transportation plan and promote the integration of ports and shipping resources.

The city has also tightened economic links across the Qiongzhou Strait that separates Zhanjiang and Hainan island, and has set up an economic cooperation zone with Beihai of the Guangxi.

Externally, Zhanjiang plans to advance its opening-up, with an emphasis on countries and regions involved in the Belt and



Zheng Renhao (center), Party secretary of Zhanjiang, visits a local enterprise. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Road Initiative, Jiang said.

"We will deepen cooperation in terms of business, trade, science, technologies and culture with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and countries and regions in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa," Jiang noted.

As a result, the city's businesses will become more competitive in the global markets for cane sugar, feedstuff, agricultural and marine products, home appliances and construction, to name a few, he added.

Zhanjiang has a spacious land

area that covers 11,693 square kilometers, roughly 10 times the size of Hong Kong, or nearly six times larger than Tokyo.

Besides, as the Chinese city with the longest coast line at 1,243 kilometers, Zhanjiang boasts an even more spacious sea area that covers about 20,000 sq km. It has one of the best natural deepwater ports, which handled 900,000 twenty-foot equivalent units in 2017 and aims to surpass 1 million this year. The local government is applying to upgrade its deepwater channel, which is currently capable of allowing

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300,000-metric-tonnage vessels to pass through, Jiang said.

After the planned improvements, which would allow 400,000-tonnage ships through, the port would be a truly international passageway that would have direct sea traffic with more than 150 countries and regions, he said.

According to the mayor, Zhanjiang Bonded Logistics Center has a high priority on the local government's agenda, which will attract domestic and

foreign companies involved in transportation, storage and shipping to set up regional centers in the city.

Zhanjiang Port is expected to develop into a South China distribution center for ironstone and petroleum, a logistics center for grain and chemical fertilizer from western and central China, an exchange center for bulk commodities and a regional transportation center for containers and bonded logistics, Mayor Jiang said.

Marine development is one of the city's main industrial strategies to revitalize its economy, along with enhancing major industrial projects' efficiency, upgrading traditional industries, and accelerating the development of modern services and high-tech industries.

Coastal tourism will also be an important part of the marine economy in the city.

A new ferry terminal at Xuwen in Zhanjiang is expected to be operated this year, which will reduce the time it takes to cross the Qiongzhou Strait to reach Hainan island from the current three hours to around one and a half hour. This will facilitate deeper tourism integration between Zhanjiang and Hainan, as the latter is becoming

a world tourism destination, Jiang said.

"Zhanjiang and Hainan share some similarities in coastal tourism but their characteristics are different. Zhanjiang is lagging behind in the industry and we see this as a significant opportunity."

The city signed a tourism cooperation agreement with Haikou, capital city of Hainan, which encourages tourism companies from both cities to mutually develop travel routes and attract more tourists. The government is also seeking support from relevant departments to extend the incentive policies for Hainan travel companies to link up with Zhanjiang, according to the mayor.

In Zhanjiang, the government has introduced the OCT Group, a State-owned tourism and culture company based in Shenzhen, to design the road along the coastline of the Leizhou peninsula, inspired by the United States' Highway 1, Jiang said. The project will begin construction this year, he added.

"The road will connect all of the city's tourism attractions, including the coastal, cultural and rural features, which will accelerate tourism development"

Transport network projects launched, boosting integration

By CAO YINGYING
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Zhanjiang in Guangdong province has made great breakthroughs in the construction of transportation infrastructure construction since the city was positioned as a national comprehensive traffic hub last year.

According to Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang, the city has drawn up comprehensive transportation development plans.

This year, Zhanjiang's government plans to invest 20.6 billion yuan (\$3.27 billion) to launch 37 major transportation projects, including the construction of an international airport and high-speed railways.

Mayor Jiang said: "Zhanjiang will build a fast-connecting high-speed railway network and a regional large-scale port to set up an efficient and comprehensive transportation hub integrating sea routes, airlines and roads."

Construction on the Shenzhen-Zhanjiang High-speed Railway has accelerated and the line is expected to enter operation in June.

China Railway Construction Engineering Group has built Zhanjiang West Railway Station to a high standard, local officials said. The station is set

to operate alongside the Shenzhen-Zhanjiang line.

Construction has also picked up on railway lines connecting Zhanjiang with Hupu in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, Haikou in Hainan province, and Guangzhou in Guangdong, as well as a tourism railway line connecting Zhanjiang in Hunan province and Haikou.

The government plans to complete construction on the west high-speed railway station and promote electrification modifications on the Maoming-Zhanjiang rail line to ensure the smooth operation of the Shenzhen-Zhanjiang high-speed railway in June.

The latter railway line is expected to launch direct rail links to Beijing, Shanghai and major cities of the Pearl River Delta, integrating into the national high-speed railway network, according to the local government. Zhanjiang will also build high-speed railway stations in Zhanjiang's central districts.

With the support of various levels of government, Zhanjiang International Airport has upgraded from a regional airport to a major transport hub, with its runway increasing in length from 2,800 meters to 3,200 meters. The optimized design of the terminals has



A view of the expanding Zhanjiang Port. LI BO / FOR CHINA DAILY

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Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang

been completed to international standards, with further upgrades set to continue. The city said it will accelerate the creation of an expressway to the airport — the Wuchuan line of the Shantou-Zhanjiang expressway.

In addition, the city will accelerate the construction of expressways such as the Yulin-Zhanjiang expressway, build the Zhanjiang section of the Guangdong coastal highway and expand the Maoming-Zhanjiang expressway.

The Zhanjiang stretch of the Shantou-Zhanjiang expressway has already entered operation, with 300 kilometers of highway roads within the city limits.

There are three major projects in Xuwen port in Zhanjiang this year, building a cargo wharf in the Nanshan operation area, improving Xuwen port's road connections, and connecting the port with the Zhanjiang-Xuwen expressway.

"The city will launch construction of port and shipping projects to strengthen Zhanjiang Port's strategic position among national ports," Jiang said. In addition, Zhanjiang will strengthen cooperation with China Merchants Group to speed up preliminary work on Zhanjiang international cruise terminal this year.

Entrepreneurs invest funds in, bring new ideas to hometown

By CHEN HONG

Entrepreneurs from Zhanjiang, a southern China coastal city, have invested generously in their hometown to beef up the local economy.

According to statistics from the local government, Zhanjiang entrepreneurs and the chambers of commerce they have joined have invested nearly 80 projects in the city since 2013, with the total investment reaching 146.4 billion yuan (\$23.2 billion).

"Zhanjiang is in its peak development period. We hope these entrepreneurs will use the opportunities in their hometown to introduce more development ideas, innovative technologies, investment projects, funds, information and professionals," said Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang.

The city's government should

improve the business environment and governance to better serve companies, Zheng noted.

Zhanjiang's private sector contributed more than 60 percent of its GDP in 2017, according to official figures, with added value increasing 7.7 percent year-on-year to reach 181.8 billion yuan. The data also show that investment from the private sector accounted for nearly 70 percent of the city's total.

Entrepreneurs from Zhanjiang have set up at least 19 chambers of commerce across the country, with investment ranging widely from aquaculture and agricultural and marine products processing, to construction, hospitality and finance.

Chen Yu, chairman of the Zhanjiang chamber of commerce in Guangdong and president of Mao de Gong Group, has invested more than 1 bil-

lion yuan in total over the past 10 years to build up a tourism resort in the city. The area is characterized by the culture, traditions and customs of the Leizhou Peninsula, where Zhanjiang is located. Born and raised in Leizhou area of Zhanjiang, Chen has grown his company from a leading food processing brand to a conglomerate with businesses ranging from hotels and wine trade to tourism and cultural industries since 2002.

"I am willing to do something good to make my hometown better, without thinking about commercial returns or seeking personal reputation, just because of the natural connection between me and my hometown," Chen said.

Zhanjiang's entrepreneurs are also active in charity programs, donating money to the city's education, rural life improvement and environmental protection projects, Zheng said.

Yang Song, president of GSD Construction based in Shenzhen, Guangdong spent more than 100 million yuan to build 38 new villas for villagers of his hometown in Wuchuan of Zhanjiang, in an effort to improve their living standards. "The entrepreneurs brought back their advanced ideas to their hometown and conveyed modern knowledge and civilization to villagers," said Zhanjiang's Mayor Jiang Jianjun.



Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang, shares his ideas on economic development at the sidelines of the ongoing 13th National People's Congress in Beijing. ZHANG FENG FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY