



A CITY ON THE MOVE — CHONGQING

Editor's note: Chongqing lies at the convergence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers and its position has allowed it to act as a crossroads for inland trade. But the municipality's ambitions extend beyond its borders. China Daily recently explored the municipality and its focus on becoming a major international trade hub.

Farmers enjoy urban life after relocation

By JAMES HEALY and JI JIN

Each workday, Li Yingmu rides his motorcycle on the 10-minute commute to his job at a factory in Chongqing's Liangjiang New Area. It's a short trip for Li, but a far cry from the challenging life he led not so long ago as a corn and wheat farmer in the nearby fields.

Those fields are gone now — absorbed by one of Liangjiang New Area's many new development projects — and Li is one of thousands of rural residents who have relocated as Chongqing expands to become a major trade crossroads of inner China.

"It's a big task" to balance urban and rural development on such a large scale, acknowledged Ling Yueming, director general of the Administrative Committee of Liangjiang New Area.

How to best do so is "a very complex question", considering that 20 million of Chongqing's 30 million people live in rural areas, he said.

"We must help farmers who move to the city adapt to urban life. And we must make sure that those who move from rural areas have jobs and a place to live," Ling said.

In addition to those who relocate, Chongqing must also accommodate the natural flow of the rural population into the city, as well as the many migrants who earlier left Chongqing and are returning now that the area is thriving, Ling said.

By the year 2020, Ling's office said, the total population of Liangjiang New Area is expected to reach 5 million, of which more than 1 million will be rural migrants from other cities and provinces. The number of people expected to relocate from rural areas of Chongqing is expected to reach 380,000.

Before relocating to the Hehe Community in the New Area, Li, the factory employee, worked long hours as a farmer. He is now a truck driver for the Chongqing Brilliant Elevator Co, a private enterprise that manufactures elevators for sale inside and outside of China.

Li Feng also works at the elevator factory. When he relocated, the government provided a month of training and helped him obtain his present position as a forklift operator, a job that pays 3,000 yuan (\$480) per month.

Adapting to city life "was not that difficult", he said, because the government solved two important problems for him — he now has good housing and stable employment.

"Life here is much better. I don't spend as much time working as when I was a farmer. I enjoy more leisure time," he said.

His standard of living is also much higher, said Li Feng, a 28-year-old who is also a former corn and wheat farmer.

"Our income as farmers for the whole family was not so high — 10,000 yuan a year," Li Feng said. The combined income of Li, his wife and his parents, who live with him in the nearby Hehe Community, is now 7,000 yuan per month.

New Area director Ling, in an exclusive interview with China Daily, said that of the 137,000 rural people who have been relocated so far during the development of the Liang-



Li Feng, a forklift operator at an elevator factory in Liangjiang New Area, is a former farmer who said he is adapting well to life in the city because of his stable income.

ang New Area (the figure includes children and the elderly), 73,000 are former farmers who have found new employment. Only 7,300 have not found jobs, mostly because their age makes it difficult for them to find work, he said.

"But we have not given up on those not able to find work," Ling said. "We help them find government positions such as management of green belts, traffic coordination and street cleaning."

"As long as we have jobs, we'll fill them with people from the area who have been relocated," he said. "But we should let the market guide people to jobs. We need to develop local economies, create more tax sources and more jobs."

He said the government "is holding match-up meetings between enterprises and farmers who have been relocated and are looking for work". Additionally, the government is paying intermediary organizations "to help provide a bridge between farmers and new enterprises".

Last year, Chongqing registered

“Life here is much better. I don't spend as much time working as when I was a farmer. I enjoy more leisure time.”

LI FENG
FARMER-TURNED-WORKER

735 new enterprises, he said. "These create new job opportunities."

The government also provides job training for the former farmers and public housing for as little as 300 yuan to 400 yuan per month, Ling added.

After corn and wheat farmer Peng Jize, 36, was relocated, he was trained for about a month for his job as a truck driver at the 120,000-square-meter elevator factory. When asked what he misses about farm life, Peng laughed and said, "Nothing."

Li Yingmu, who is 48 years old, likewise prefers his new urban life. What he enjoys most is the stable income. He said he's paid more than 3,000 yuan per month as a truck driver.

But there's so much more to like, he said. "The environment is good and clean. We have a clean and clear atmosphere and good air. And the standard of living is better. We can use gas for cooking, which we did not have as farmers."

Li Yingmu acknowledged that not everyone prefers the lifestyle after relocation. "Some of the senior citizens who were farmers are now too old to work," he said. "They miss the land. They miss the old life. They want to grow food. The younger farmers want to make more money."

Li Feng, the forklift operator, said there was another reason he was glad to leave the rural life behind. "Now we don't have to worry about the harvest"

Contact the writers at jameshealy@chinadaily.com.cn and jijin@chinadaily.com.cn



Cuntan Inland Port in Chongqing has two of its nine piers for loading automobiles onto ships. Located in Liangjiang New Area, the port is expected to handle 1 million containers a year in three to five years, up from 650,000 containers in 2013.

YUAN ZHIQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

The municipality is pinning its future on becoming China's foremost inland crossroads for domestic and international trade, whether by air, water, rail or road. **Kang Bing and James Healy** report.

Chongqing, a growth-spurt city in China's awakening southwest, has been compared to Chicago because, like that midwestern American city in the 19th century, it stands as a gateway to development of the nation's western frontier. But Chongqing, one of four municipalities under the central government's direct control — and a pilot city that is pioneering China's inland development — could just as easily be compared to Texas, the US state that prides itself on doing everything on a grand scale. From cavernous new convention center facilities to sprawling factories to bustling mega-ports on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River, Chongqing has taken to heart the construction cranes perched atop new high-rises are as common a sight as the lush foliage and countless trees that line the city's highways and boulevards.

Driving this growth, as the mountain-hemmed city of 30 million people overtakes the farmland and villages of its rich past, is a vision of Chongqing stepping onto the world stage.

"We want to become an international city," said Du Shulin, deputy director of Liangjiang New Area's information office.

Noting that coastal cities such as Shanghai have long enjoyed the fruits of robust investment and bustling exports, Du said, "We think it's our turn now."

'Everything is big'

It's evident that a bigger-is-better spirit is guiding the growth of Liangjiang New Area, the third national-development and opening-up zone in China (after Shanghai's Pudong New Area and Tianjin's Binhai New Area) and the first such area in inland China.

"Big projects and big planning — everything is big," Zhang Li, an associate research fellow with the Liangjiang New Area, said when describing the city's approach to becoming China's next major trade hub.

Take, for instance, the city's newest port on the Yangtze River, Guoyuan Inland Port. (Chongqing has eight ports along three rivers.) Built atop what used to be a riverside village, Guoyuan, inland China's largest port at 2,800 meters long, features 16 piers — 10 for loading and unloading cargo containers, three for automobile shipments and three for non-container goods.

The port's steady water levels through all four seasons will make Guoyuan available year-round to even the largest cargo ships, said Liu Jian, general manager of Guoyuan Port Container Corp.

Guoyuan is a sleeping giant, however. Its rail link won't be finished until October, with its opening set for next year's Spring Festival, Liu said. And the port, which opened in December, is still in low gear.

"Because this port is new, shipping



WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

A church stands in Liangjiang New Area, which is the third national development and opening-up zone and the first in inland China.

companies need time to plan and know the port. They are still making arrangements," Liu said. Even so, the port expects to handle 100,000 cargo containers this year, 350,000 next year and 800,000 in just five years, he said.

In the meantime, Cuntan Inland Port is the workhorse among Chongqing's ports.

"While Shanghai is an important port at the end of the Yangtze River, Cuntan is an important port at the start of the river," said Qu Hong, general manager of port operator Chongqing International Container Terminal Co Ltd. "Of all the goods transported from

Chongqing to overseas, 90 percent of them are transported from here."

Cuntan, which is 1,316 meters long, features nine piers, seven of which can load cargo simultaneously, and two of which are specially designed for loading automobiles onto ships. On one recent day, a five-deck cargo ship with 1,300 cars made in Chongqing was anchored offshore, awaiting the journey to Shanghai.

In 2006, when the port opened, 46,000 cargo containers, import and export combined, came through Cuntan, Qu said. Last year, the port handled 650,000 containers and expects

to handle 700,000 this year.

Because Chongqing's industry is developing so rapidly, port officials foresee 1 million containers a year going through Cuntan in three to five years, Qu said. The port's maximum capacity is 1.4 million cargo containers a year, he added.

One advantage of Cuntan port, Qu said, is the meat and fruit distribution center being built on a hillside beside the port. It's a coup for Cuntan, considering the stricter regulations on the shipment of such products by water versus air. Guoyuan's Liu said his port will have no such facility.

However, when Guoyuan is completed, it will be the only inland port to boast water, road, rail and air links — linchpins for Chongqing's ambition to become inland China's most accessible inland trade hub.

Silk Road connection

With an eye to boosting import traffic and domestic demand along with just one facilitating the exports from Chongqing's growing industrial might, the river city is taking full advantage of its land connections as well, particularly the Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe railway, which is part of the new Silk Road.

"Its original purpose was for an export channel," Ling Yueming, director general of the Administrative Committee of Liangjiang New Area, said of the 11,179-km railway that links Chongqing and Duisburg, Germany, by way of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland (and which makes trade stops in all those countries).

"But we're also strengthening efforts to bring back cargoes from European countries," Ling, a member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Chongqing Municipal Committee, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily. "By organizing return cargo, we reduce the trade deficit between China and Europe and reduce logistical costs."



WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

A newlywed couple pose for photos in Liangjiang New Area in May. The development area is designed to include not only the biggest convention center in western China, but also residential buildings and plenty of green space.

Besides, he said, "reliance solely on exports is not sustainable. Our economic development cannot go without the rest of China and the world. And the development of China relies on three 'horse carriages': domestic demand, exports and investment."

While coastal cities rely on exports to drive economic development, he said, Chongqing is looking to ride all three carriages to sustainable growth. In addition to stoking domestic demand for the fruits of Chongqing's industry, including laptop computers, automobiles, helicopters and small airplanes, the city aims to attract investment by streamlining the registration process for new enterprises.

"All enterprises can go through the registration process with just one application table now, one window, and finish in one day," Ling said. "This simplification of business registration procedures will change pre-approval into post-registration. For business registration, we will no longer ask a bank for a deposit letter. (An enterprise) will just have to promise they will get capital ready in three to six months. This is an efficient way to cut costs."

Ling said such reforms will help accelerate local development.

Showcasing the city

Chongqing also is taking steps to

feed traffic into the burgeoning trade hub.

Liangjiang New Area recently launched an English-language website to spotlight success stories and to attract investment and foreign trade, especially from Europe. And to showcase what is available for import, the city built the Commodity Trading Exhibition Center, a sprawling venue where wholesalers (and eventually retail shoppers) can visit numerous shops to preview available goods, from American-made automobiles to French wines.

Additionally, to draw tourist and business trade to the New Area, the city has constructed the super-sized Yuehai Exhibition & Convention City, which General Manager Shi Jian said is the biggest in western China. The center, just 15 minutes from the airport, features an adjacent five-star hotel (still under construction), 18 restaurants, exhibition areas, a grand ballroom and a 20,000-square-meter multifunctional hall that can hold from 15,000 to 20,000 people. The hall "is one of only four such pillar-less halls in China," Shi said.

Surrounding the center will be residential buildings and plenty of green space, and Shi envisions the center and adjoining areas eventually becoming a "sustainable smart city" with its own

Contact the writers at kangbing@chinadaily.com.cn and jameshealy@chinadaily.com.cn



LI WENBIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

An Enstrom helicopter assembled in Chongqing is on its way to an exhibition in May. Chongqing General Aviation Industry Group Co acquired the US helicopter manufacturer Enstrom in 2012.

Chongqing pushes general aviation

By TAN YINGZI and LUO WANGSHU in Chongqing

Chongqing listed aviation as a key industry.

December 2010 The Chongqing government signs a strategic cooperation framework agreement and memorandum with the Aviation Industry Corp of China.

January 2011 Chongqing Helicopter Investment Cooperation (now the Chongqing General Aviation Industry Group Co Ltd) is founded.

September 2011 The Chongqing government establishes a leading group for developing general aviation.

May 2012 Chongqing Liangjiang Aviation Industry Investment Group Co is established, and Pilatus Aircraft Ltd, an international aircraft manufacturer, settles in Chongqing.

July 2012 Chongqing is selected as a pilot city for low-altitude airspace reform.

December 2012 Chongqing Helicopter Investment Cooperation acquires the US Enstrom Helicopter Corp.

June 2013 A Chongqing aviation vocational school is settled in the Liangjiang aviation industrial park.

December 2013 Chongqing University establishes the College of Aerospace Engineering.

April 2014 The General Aviation Association of Chongqing and the Aeronautics and Astronautics Society of Chongqing are established.

the United States, there are at least 240,000 general aviation aircraft, 70 percent of which are privately owned for entertainment.

Efforts should be made to attract people, such as white-collar workers and college students, to join flight clubs and study how to pilot an aircraft for fun, he said.

Li Yinghong, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said Chongqing has done it right in emphasizing professional training, which will be the city's big advantage as it develops general aviation.

The industrial park in Liangjiang New Area includes at least two schools for training pilots.

Chongqing Aviation Vocation School, a private school, has been recruiting students since September 2012. It has 300 students.

The Chongqing General Aviation Training Co, co-founded by the Civil Aviation Flight University of China and the Chongqing General Aviation Industry Group in 2012, will start to recruit students this year.

With programs for private pilot and commercial pilot licensing, as well as aircraft maintenance training, the school aims to certify 300 pilots and 500 maintenance personnel each year.

The industry will be short more than 3,000 pilots within the coming five years, said Chen Bin, a researcher with the Sino-US joint venture Easyfly Aviation.

Chongqing has an ambitious plan. According to authorities in Liangjiang New Area, the general aviation industry is expected to bring a total production value of 300 billion yuan (\$48 billion) a year to the municipality by 2020.

It's an auspicious start for the home of the Flying Tigers.

Contact the writers at tanyingzi@chinadaily.com.cn and luowangshu@chinadaily.com.cn