

New project will bolster commercial, trading hub

By ZHENG CAIXIONG
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Zhou Yuxiang is confident that a new international commerce and trade project will help provide a bright future for Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, amid the rapid development of e-commerce worldwide.

The president of Zhanjiang Huarong Real Estate Group said the coastal city, which has become a large production base in Leizhou Peninsula, still needs to build many "special bazaars" to help boost the sale of its products, even as expectations of e-commerce playing a major part in the city's economic development grow.

"I am confident of Zhanjiang's future as a commercial and trading hub," Zhou told China Daily.

The city will be able to attract even more businesses after the new high-speed rail linking Zhanjiang to provincial capital Guangzhou is completed and begins operating next year, Zhou said.

"Zhanjiang, which has lagged behind the Pearl River Delta cities in economic development,

\$1.86 billion investment for the project

is sparing no effort to boost its commerce and trade to stimulate its economy," he said.

Zhanjiang also offers abundant agricultural and aquatic resources, but the city needs to build its sales channels and markets, Zhou said.

The 167-hectare commercial and trade project will have a floor space of more than 3 million square meters, becoming a new town in the southern city.

The project, which costs Zhou's company more than 12.3 billion yuan (\$1.86 billion), is expected to become a special core market around the Beibu Bay region, he said. Trial operations are set to start next year.

The first phase of construction covers a floor space of more than 700,000 square meters, including special bazaars for furniture, building materials, hardware, foodstuff, small commodities and traditional Chinese medicine.

The second phase will boast more than 1 million square meters and include a trading center, exhibition hall, high-end office buildings, apartments and supplementary facilities.

The third phase, which will offer another million square meters, will have a modern logistics warehouse.

The project will also include annual trade fairs for special commodities to help boost cooperation and sales in the coming years.



Workers operate machines at a Baosteel plant in Zhanjiang. WENG ZHICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Infrastructure top of development agenda

Zhanjiang's top officials have identified improved transportation as being key to the city's future, **Zhan Lisheng** reports.

If they are not already sitting in a meeting, they are more than likely on their way to one. And there is one topic on the agenda at every meeting: infrastructure development.

The top officials in the coastal city of Zhanjiang in South China's Guangdong province are preoccupied with the subject like never before.

Both the city's Party Secretary Wei Hongguang and Mayor Wang Zhongbing have been busy in recent months meeting both provincial and national officials tasked with formulating and developing policies regarding traffic infrastructure, visiting projects under construction and presiding over meetings to ensure that projects remain on track and on schedule.

All of their work is focused on achieving one goal: accelerating the development of the city's infrastructure—for harbors, railways, expressways and airports.

Aside from intercity and intracity expressways and high-speed railways, Zhanjiang is aiming to have projects for the city's new airport and railway terminal for bullet train services underway by the end of the year. Work on the passenger and cargo wharfs of Xuwen Harbor is slated to begin in late October.

The new airport, expected to become operational in late 2018, will have a terminal covering an area of approxi-

mately 60,000 square meters. It will be capable of handling 4.2 million passengers annually by 2025 compared to 1.2 million last year.

The new railway terminal, which is set to begin operation late next year, will give the city its first bullet train service, enabling local people to reach the Pearl River Delta's more developed cities in about two hours.

In addition, the passenger and cargo wharfs of Xuwen Harbor, which are slated for completion in 2018, will significantly improve transportation capacity to China's southernmost Hainan province as well as the countries along the Maritime Silk Road—Southeast Asian and African countries.

Its expressways are expected to extend to about 600 kilometers from the current 238 km in the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020).

"Developing traffic pivots is essential if we are to improve the people's welfare and (these developments) will play a decisive role in the city's economic development," noted Wei.

He continued: "We will earmark a greater fiscal budget for the projects and try innovative funding approaches while seeking the support of government at all levels."

Addressing the opening of this year's people's local congress in February, Mayor Wang said the city has this year pooled 9 billion yuan



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“Developing traffic pivots is essential if we are to improve the people's welfare.”

Wei Hongguang, Party chief of Zhanjiang in Guangdong province

(\$1.38 billion) for investment in 17 major traffic infrastructure projects in an attempt to improve the city's transportation infrastructure.

"Zhanjiang is striving to become a regional center in the Beibu Bay Rim," Wang said.

The Beihu Bay Rim refers to regions in Hainan province, the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region as well as some ASEAN countries.

"Unless it develops into traffic pivot, it will be impossible for Zhanjiang to become a regional center," Wang explained.

"As a result, we can see just how crucial traffic infrastructure (development) is to Zhanjiang's economic vitality and future development."

Such views have been echoed by many experts and businesspeople alike, including Cai Ying, a civil engineering professor and high-speed railways expert at Southwest Jiaotong University in Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, and Ou Dahai, managing director of Zhanjiang Blue Sea and Sky E-Commerce Co Ltd.

"Zhanjiang has unique geographical advantages, so it is feasible, and also necessary, to develop the city into a regional traffic hub," said Cai. "In addition, Zhanjiang is a strategic pivot in China's Belt and Road Initiative."

Ou sees infrastructural improvements as crucial if Zhanjiang is to catch up with the flourishing Pearl River Delta cities and become a regional pivot.

"People from other regions and countries, including businesspeople, top talent and tourists, will be reluctant to come if Zhanjiang's traffic is constantly gridlocked," said Ou.

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Banking on e-commerce in port city

By LI WENFANG
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Deng Qi used to oversee e-commerce giant Alibaba Group's operations in the western area of Guangdong province from its Jiangmen office, but he moved his family to Zhanjiang last year to start a new office to tap the local market.

His move was part of Alibaba's restructuring efforts to break into the markets of more third and fourth-tier cities.

"When Alibaba offered the position (of general manager, Alibaba Zhanjiang Service Center), I felt it was worth it. I felt the great potential here," Deng said.

The potential, Deng said, is attributed to the fact that Zhanjiang is a port city – it boasts a population of 8 million and a strong industrial foundation.

The city also offers sizable agricultural, furniture and home appliances sectors. Its rice cooker production alone accounts for more than 70 percent of the national market. The drawbacks in the e-commerce sector, as he observed, include an absence of a high-speed rail network, insufficient human resources and third-party services.

"When you see the opportunity, you should go early. If you wait for the opening of the high-speed railway and the easy access for everybody, you will face great competition," he said. "My goal is to put everything into position before the opening of the high-speed railway so that when people start to flow back (to Zhanjiang), I will be able to accommodate them."

Deng recalled that when Zhanjiang Party secretary Wei Hongguang visited his company in May, the official said any gaps in the market can mean opportunity and room for development.

"You see countless people like me in a city like Guangzhou. But in a city like Zhanjiang, I feel able to help enterprises and achieve my career goals with Alibaba's internet approach, products and services," Deng said.

Deng plans to expand all the major products of Alibaba in Zhanjiang. Those include alibaba.com, which is a B2B platform for facilitating foreign trade; OneTouch, which offers foreign trade services to small and medium-sized enterprises; and Ant Financial Services, which hands out loans to SMEs.

Zhanjiang suppliers on alibaba.com now total 97 and Deng believes they can grow to more than 300. In com-

parison, the whole of Guangdong houses 25,000 suppliers, including 4,700 of them in six cities in the western part of the province.

More than 80 Zhanjiang enterprises are qualified for OneTouch, with over 50 already using the services. Gross merchandise volume on the platform stood at 7.8 million yuan (\$1.2 million) last year. Ant Financial has just been rolled out in the city.

Last October, Zhanjiang Mayor Wang Zhongbing witnessed the opening of Deng's office, which had a team of three workers. That has since grown to 20 members.

“The national policy of supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the internet Plus economic strategy... perfectly fits our goal.”

Deng Qi, general manager of Alibaba Zhanjiang Service Center

Deng sees it as his mission to build the e-commerce climate in Zhanjiang, so that businesses have access to e-commerce solutions in the market.

He is sharpening Alibaba's e-commerce business in Zhanjiang to that effect, establishing a third-party service company in the city.

Deng's company is also jointly developing a cross-border e-commerce industrial park in Zhanjiang's Chikan district, with the aim of forming a mass of third-party service providers.

His company and its subsidiaries are set to move to the park on Sept 8 and they are eligible for a one-year rental exemption. "Cities like Guangzhou and Shenzhen have a number of e-commerce parks and we have been pushing for such a park in Zhanjiang," he said. "The national policy of supporting innovation, entrepreneurship and the internet Plus economic strategy, and the inclusion of the e-commerce park in the Zhanjiang government work report early this year, perfectly fits

Greener growth for a beautiful city

By ZHENG CAIXIONG

Zhanjiang is going all out to protect its environment, even as it accelerates its economic development.

According to the city's blueprint, Zhanjiang will set up more than 30,000 hectares of tropical rainforest between 2016 and 2035. Its rainforest area is expected to hit 65 percent by the end of 2035.

In addition to the common trees of the area, the city will also plant more arboreal varieties in the coming years.

The city government will also draw talent from home and abroad to speed up the construction of its natural protection zones in the years ahead.

It will increase investment and enhance scientific

research on constructing and protecting the city's natural protection zones, as well as educate residents to protect the environment.

Zhanjiang, located in the Leizhou Peninsula, has three natural protection zones, including one at the State-level and two at the county-level. The city also has 11 city-level, tree protection zones.

The port city faces the vast South China Sea. It has 20 natural ocean protection zones, covering a total of 180,000 hectares and accounting for 9 percent of the city's waters.

Of those, the Xuwen Coral Reef Natural Protection Zone and Leizhou Natural Protection Zone for Marine Organisms are at the State level.

Last October, local fishermen also raised funds via self-

financing to offer a protection base for white dolphins. Zhanjiang's waters are estimated to hold more than 300 wild white dolphins, which are under State protection.

The port city is listed as one of the first group of candidates for the United Nations Sustainable Urban Development and Livable Garden Community Program, according to Zhanjiang Mayor Wang Zhongbing.

"That requires the city authorities to go all out to protect our environment," Wang said.

The mayor has pledged not to sacrifice the city's environment for economic development.

He expressed that determination at a meeting with a delegation led by Arab Hoballah,

a senior official of the United Nations Environment Program, earlier this year.

"Zhanjiang is dedicated to improving the happiness of its residents by reducing carbon emissions, operating reasonable sewage treatment facilities and maintaining an orderly waste disposal classification system," Wang said.

Hoballah said Zhanjiang offers great potential for urban development. He said he hopes that the beautiful city will spread the idea of sustainable development and energy conservation to a wide audience.

The program is UNEP's first demonstration project focusing on the sustainable development of developing nations and the prioritizing of Chinese cities and communities as demonstration sites.



To strive for a better living environment, the city advocates a low-carbon lifestyle. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The project will help build environmental standards, international expert teams, demonstration sites and more

global cooperation to create more sample cities of sustainable development across the world. Only three cities will

be approved for the first group of sustainable "vanguard cities" in China due to the strict evaluation system.