

Land-sea corridor opens up opportunities for Zhanjiang



Zhanjiang, a port city in South China's Guangdong province, is striving to become a major engine of modern coastal economic development. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guangdong port city to play a key role in developing China's western region

By CHEN HONG
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China's new land-sea corridor for its less-developed western region is creating new opportunities for Zhanjiang, a port city in South China's Guangdong province, to serve as an important starting off point.

According to a development plan, unveiled by the National Development and Reform Commission on its website in August, Zhanjiang will build a network of railways, roads and air connections to link the inland northwestern region to major ports in the south.

It aims to speed up the opening-up of the region and deepen its economic and trade ties with the outside world.

Zhanjiang is located in western Guangdong, but geographically neighbors the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and is separated from Hainan province by a strait.



Zhanjiang is facing unprecedented opportunities in being highlighted in several national strategies."

He Weimin, researcher at Guangdong Ocean University

It has been included in the new massive land-sea corridor plan, in which it's required to place much emphasis on leveraging its role as a traditional estuary for the southwestern region, and becoming a better linkage point with the Yangtze River economic belt.

The central government will support the upgrading of the Zhanjiang Port to develop bulk cargo and cold-chain transportation, to build large-

Key projects

Zhanjiang had 36 key projects either break ground or become operational on Saturday, a timely gift to the nation's celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

The projects involve capital of 77.6 billion yuan (\$10.89 billion) and belong to fields ranging from high-tech and growth industries to infrastructure, welfare and public facilities.

A key project is the expansion of

Zhanjiang Port's current 300,000-tonnage deepwater channel into a 400,000-tonnage one, which has investment of 3.87 billion yuan.

The project is expected to turn Zhanjiang Port into the only world-class deepwater port and wharf in South China capable of accommodating 400,000-tonnage vessels, the largest in the world, when it is completed in a year's time.

YUAN SHENGGAO

scale professional wharves for dry and bulk cargo and to carry out dredging projects at the port's entrance.

Zhanjiang Port is the first modern port the nation developed after the founding of the People's Republic of China, and has played a key role in the city's opening-up and in the national Belt & Road Initiative.

Zhanjiang's participation in the

plan is paid-off in the city's development mission, which has been identified as building "a passageway, a free trade port and a pilot zone", meaning that the city will take part in the construction of the international sea-land corridor in the western region, strive to become a part of the China (Guangdong) Pilot Free Trade Zone and build a national pilot zone for marine economy.

Zhanjiang's position at the intersection of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, China (Hainan) Pilot Free Trade Zone (Port) and the city cluster of Beibu Gulf will help fulfill the interactive development of the western region with the three national strategic areas, according to Zhanjiang development and reform bureau.

"China Merchants Group, the largest shareholder of Zhanjiang Port, can provide convenience to the construction of the corridor which has arranged 34 ports in the countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative," a senior official of the bureau was quoted as saying by Zhanjiang Daily.

As one of the five major industries of Zhanjiang, the heavy chemical industry will rapidly develop in the port-centered areas, which will radiate to the cities and nurture the industrial chain along the corridor, he noted.

Zhanjiang Port Group also sees it as a historic opportunity to be a part of the new land-sea corridor plan. It is projected to build additional dry

ports, mainly regions along the corridor including Chongqing, Yunnan, Sichuan, Hunan and Guangxi, for a network that covers the central and western region, according to the company.

It has already built and operates a dry port in Guizhou province.

Given Zhanjiang's position linking the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the group will strengthen ties with Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well as the overseas ports and industrial parks of China Merchants Group on the one hand, and seek cooperation with rail companies on the other hand. "As a result, we will build a land-sea logistics corridor to facilitate the two-way goods flows that connect the Belt and the Road," said an executive of the group.

"Zhanjiang is facing unprecedented opportunities in being highlighted in several national strategies, I'm sure it will embrace the development," said He Weimin, a researcher at Guangdong Ocean University.

From hard times to the age of affluence

By CHEN HONG

He Ming, 70, is one of the residents in Zhanjiang who experienced a poor and difficult time and witnessed the rapid development of the country.

"The kids were dressed in rags and had little to eat in my childhood," He said, according to a report by Zhanjiang Daily. "In my memory, I didn't even have pants before school-age and was covered by parts of mosquito net, which was handmade by my mother."

His aunt gave him a pair of shorts when he was eight years old, which he cherished and took off after school, He recalled with tears in his eyes.

Born in 1949, the same year as the founding of the People's Republic of China, He retired from the Zhanjiang federation of trade unions 10 years ago.

"Now farmers can live in their own beautiful buildings. The lives of

people have been dramatically improved and our country is getting strong and prosperous," He said.

Talking about his hometown, he said the city has sped up its development pace. "High-speed rail finally reached Zhanjiang last year and the gross domestic product of the city surpassed 300 billion yuan (\$42.1 billion) for the first time," said He.

He noted that city's growth can be explosive given its advantageous geographic location, abundant natural resources and the incentive policies from the central and provincial governments.

Lin Yongqiang, also 70, shared the same confidence in the future of Zhanjiang.

As a retired worker from a local aquatic company, Lin said the food can reflect the great changes the city has experienced over the past 70 years.

"When I was seven or eight years old, my family had to rummage for the small sweet potatoes left in the

fields for food after harvest and ate their leaves," Lin said. He added that food shortages became worse at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s. Many people were starving.

When he started working for the aquatic company in 1971, people could hardly have fresh seafood without proper preservation technology, he said. Fish was sold after heavy salting. With the development of the preservation technology and cold-chain logistics, local seafood could be sold abroad.

"People's lives have been closely connected with the development of our country. Our economy has grown fast and the food on dining tables is getting more abundant," Lin said.



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Zhanjiang joins the high-speed railway network last year. It is designed to be a regional transport hub in the next five years. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

New firms and updated transport network put city on investment map

By CHEN HONG

Zhanjiang, an emerging city in South China's Guangdong province, is to catch rising investment opportunities with improved administrative services and better ecological environment.

The local government issued a comprehensive reform plan on optimizing the business environment in July.

This includes measures to improve the commercial system, a management system for corporate investment, legal system and arrangements for trade assistance.

The market supervision department pledged to further simplify the procedure for setting up company registration and enhance the use of e-channels to save time for companies.

It now takes just two days to fulfill all the procedures for a new company in Zhanjiang, according to the department.

Companies and industrial associations have been invited to participate in the drafting of the local regula-

tions, said the justice department of Zhanjiang. It reviewed the normative documents regularly, abolishing the outdated and revising documents.

It also set up a strict mechanism to ensure the transparency and justice of law enforcement.

The customs department said it cut the overall clearance time for imports to less than 40 hours in the first half of this year. This is down nearly 60 percent from the level of 2018. It is working on new measures to further reduce the clearance time, cut costs and launch guarantees for trade companies, said the customs department.

According to official figures, the number of newly registered market entities surged 22.7 percent year-on-year to 50,000. The new foreign-funded companies rocketed 6.5 times to 143 in 2018. The city was selected as one of the top 50 cities in China with the most investment potential.

Chen Hongwen is an economic researcher with a Party school in Zhanjiang.

He said the investment from a group of transnational companies,

including BASF, a world-leading chemical company, indicated that the business environment of the city has greatly improved.

It also shows that the market is increasingly attractive and dynamic.

He attributed the positive achievements mainly to the transport upgrades and optimization of the industrial foundation, according to a report by Zhanjiang Daily.

The city joined the high-speed railway network last year. It is designed to be a national transport hub in the next five years.

This will connect it to Southwest China, the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province and Hainan province, which is separated from Zhanjiang by the Qiongzhou Strait, said Chen. "Zhanjiang is fully capable to become a sub-center of Guangdong province," he noted.

Despite the fast development, data from the Department of Ecology and Environment of Guangdong indicated that the overall air quality of Zhanjiang ranked first in the province from January to August this year. The PM 2.5 index stood at 25.



The Zhanjiang branch of Baosteel, one of China's largest steel makers. ZHANG FENGFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Government reaffirms vows to increase development, living standards

By CHENG HONG

The local government of Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, has vowed to consistently improve the living standards of its residents while accelerating economic development, according to local officials.

During an inspection tour of a

few local companies, industrial parks and infrastructure construction sites in the city's Mazhang district early this month, both Party Secretary Zheng Renhao and Mayor Jiang Jianjun of Zhanjiang urged local officials to understand the problems faced by companies and provide effective solutions.

While sticking to high-quality development, especially in the modern service industry and advanced manufacturing industry, Party Secretary Zheng said the government must ensure social stability and improve the sense of fulfillment of local residents.

At a thematic seminar on "remaining true to the Party spirit,

always keeping the mission in mind" in Zhanjiang in mid-September, which had the presence of the city's top officials, Mayor Jiang said, "We must always have the people in mind and prioritize livelihood issues and do our bits to make sure that people's satisfaction, happiness and safety will continue to improve."

Once a less developed city, Zhanjiang has developed at a faster rate after being positioned by the provincial government as a sub-center in the province at the end of 2017, and later being included in a couple of national strategies.

The city has attached much importance to the development of

its port industry, coastal tourism industry, agriculture with local characteristics, and promoting the integration of civil and military industries. Meanwhile, it is supporting the real economy, diversifying its export market, increasing trade facilitation and enhancing companies' international competitiveness.