



Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang, delivers a speech to mark the construction of the third blast furnace at the Zhanjiang branch of Baosteel. ZHANG FENGFENG / CHINA DAILY



Zhanjiang Mayor Jiang Jianjun (fourth from right) attends the opening ceremony of the BASF liaison office in the city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Trade with BRI regions skyrockets with better port links

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhanjiang's trade with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative skyrocketed in the first quarter of this year, propelled by the southern port city's enhanced efforts to increase its imports and exports.

According to the latest local customs statistics, trade between Zhanjiang and countries and regions participating in the BRI reached 2.5 billion yuan (\$372.1 million) from January to March this year, up 44.6 percent year-on-year and accounting for nearly one-third of the city's total trade volume in the same period. Exports increased by 22.1 percent year-on-year to 1.5 billion yuan, while imports doubled to 1 billion yuan, as per official figures.

The city's exports focused on machinery, furniture, steel products and paper while imports were mainly aquatic and marine products, coal and sugar.

2.5 billion yuan

The trade volume between Zhanjiang and BRI countries and regions in the first quarter of this year

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been the largest trade market of Zhanjiang among regions involved in the BRI. Trade volume with the region accounted for 50.7 percent of the city's total foreign trade of 1.27 billion yuan in the first quarter. It was followed by India, Saudi Arabia and Russia.

As the only hub city in western Guangdong involved in the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, the city has experienced great opportunity to increase its trade relationship with the world by strengthening its port.

As Zhanjiang is between the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the cluster of cities in the Beibu Gulf, it can become a hub along the South China Sea to link these areas with the BRI regions, said Mayor Jiang Jianjun.

Jiang told the media earlier this year that Zhanjiang Port, which ranked 11th in cargo throughput in the Chinese mainland in 2018, will intensify shipping lines with the Greater Bay Area cities and Hainan province to jointly develop the markets of BRI regions.

"Ultimately, Zhanjiang Port will play a bigger role as an influential international port," Jiang said.

A project to upgrade Zhanjiang Port, which aims to serve up to 400,000-metric-ton vessels, up from the current capacity of 300,000 tons, is expected to begin soon.

So far, Zhanjiang Port has about 40 shipping lines for container vessels, including 15 international lines.

The port offers convenient sea-land shipments to China's central and southwestern regions, including Guizhou, Yunnan, Hunan and Chongqing for cargoes from and to ASEAN, Africa and Europe.

Jiang said Zhanjiang can play a critical role in connecting the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, relying on the advantage of its port.

To better promote trade between the city and ASEAN, this year's Zhanjiang-ASEAN Agricultural Trade Fair to be held in May will double its exhibition area from last year's session. The exhibition period will also be prolonged from three days to four, according to the fair's organizers.

Last year's fair attracted more than 1,000 companies and institutions from 32 countries and regions as well as 21,000 professional visitors.

Projects to enhance city's role as hub

Blast furnace and pharmaceutical center among new endeavors set to further modernize local economy

By CHEN HONG

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A group of large investment projects began construction in Zhanjiang in the southern Guangdong province, to prop up the burgeoning city's new status as a regional hub.

According to the local government, a total of 73 major projects will break ground with an accumulative investment of 46 billion yuan (\$6.8 billion) in 2019. That's compared to 42 billion yuan last year.

Of the projects, 11 with nearly half of the planned total annual investment amount, or 22.9 billion yuan, broke ground in the first quarter.

Once a less-developed city in Guangdong, Zhanjiang has become more attractive to investors since the provincial government positioned it as a sub-center in the province at the end of 2017, meaning it was promoted to a position on par with Zhuhai and Shantou, and only behind Shenzhen and Guangzhou, two

economic powerhouses of the province.

Located on the west wing of Guangdong, Zhanjiang was given the same importance as Shantou, on the east wing, as one of two new engines to bolster the province's economic growth by developing a modern coastal economic belt.

"Zhanjiang will actively grab the favorable opportunities granted by the central and provincial governments ... and stick to the opening-up policy to promote regional integration," said Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang.

To fulfill the goal, Zheng said the city government identified a strategy of building a passageway, a free trade port and a pilot zone, which put the emphasis on the construction of a modern transportation system, on wider opening-up to highlight the city's pivotal role in the Maritime Silk Road, and on the development of a modern industrial system.

Among projects that kicked off in the first quarter, the Zhanjiang

branch of Baosteel, one of China's largest steel makers, plans to invest roughly 19 billion yuan in the construction of its third blast furnace.

According to the company, the new blast furnace will focus on the production of hot-rolled and cold-rolled ultra-high-strength steel and auto body sheets, while adopting a new ultra-low emission standard.

The operation of the new blast furnace, which is due in July 2021, will raise the annual production of iron melt of the facility to nearly 12.3 million metric tons, molten steel to about 12.5 million tons and steel products to roughly 10.8 million tons. All the figures are far higher than the designed capacity of the facility, which began production in 2015.

The company, located on Donghai Island in Zhanjiang, has been the major part of the city's plan to build a world-leading environmentally friendly near-port heavy industrial base, which is mainly comprised of steel, chemicals and papermaking.



A hub city for the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Zhanjiang offers a convenient passageway for cargo shipment between Southwest China and the world. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Zhanjiang to seek major railway, marine developments

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhanjiang, a coastal city in the southwest of Guangdong province, will rely on its advantages in location, resources and industries to integrate with the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, according to senior officials of the city.

Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang, recently told the media that Zhanjiang has an important role to play in connecting the Greater Bay Area and its neighboring areas.

An outline for the development and planning of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, which was approved by the State Council in February, highlighted the coordinated development between the Greater Bay Area and the city cluster along the Beibu Gulf.

"As a pivotal city of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Zhanjiang is right at the convergence of the Greater Bay Area, the Beibu Gulf Economic Zone and Hainan Pilot Free Trade Zone," Jiang said.

"Therefore it can play a crucial role in the coordinated growth of the three regions," the mayor added.

Already a comprehensive national hub of transportation, Zhanjiang will further improve its transportation facilities to better serve the

Greater Bay Area and neighboring regions, according to Jiang.

The mayor said Zhanjiang will own the only 400,000-metric-ton harbor in South China after upgrading the existing port facilities.

The city is now implementing a project to further upgrade and expand the harbor, aiming to better serve the international trade demands from the Greater Bay Area and neighboring regions.

Jiang said four high-speed railways that will link the Greater Bay Area, the Beibu Gulf region and Hainan free trade zone are under construction in Zhanjiang, which are expected to significantly improve regional connectivity upon completion.

The mayor said the development plan for the Greater Bay Area also involves the transfer of resources and industry and Zhanjiang is ready to accept such a transfer.

For instance, Zhanjiang will use the innovation and technology resources from the Greater Bay Area to further enhance its advantageous industries.

Jiang said Zhanjiang is cooperating with higher-learning and research institutions as well as tech companies to upgrade its marine industries.

"One project is the development of a national-level marine science laboratory in Zhanjiang," Jiang said, add-

ing that a number of similar projects are expected to speed up Zhanjiang's efforts in building a national demonstration city in marine economy.

The mayor added that Zhanjiang plans to attract more professionals and entrepreneurs from the Greater Bay Area with a favorable work and business environment.

"We are endeavoring to develop an administrative service system according to international practices and norms so that businesses and professionals can enjoy a stable, fair and transparent environment here in Zhanjiang," Jiang said, explaining that the government is deepening regulatory reforms that aim to offer efficient, tailored services to businesses.

The mayor noted that Zhanjiang is also stepping up the development of a modern agriculture with local characteristics to meet the Greater Bay Area's demand for high-quality farming products and seafood.

Zheng Renhao, Party secretary of Zhanjiang, said the city should make use of the opportunities of the Greater Bay Area and Beibu Gulf city cluster development to boost local advantageous industries such as steel, petrochemicals, papermaking, offshore oil exploration, modern agriculture and marine science, making it a hub for the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.



Zhanjiang-ASEAN Agricultural Trade Fair is a platform to facilitate trade between Zhanjiang and Southeast Asia. LIU JICHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Zhanjiang is expected to become the only city in South China to host a port that can accommodate 400,000-ton vessels after completion of a project to upgrade its harbor. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY