

By CHEN HONG

chenhong@chinadaily.com.cn

Positioned as a sub-center in western Guangdong province, the coastal city of Zhanjiang has strategic plans to play a more important role in regional development.

"Zhanjiang is on a fast track pushed by unprecedented positioning and unparalleled support from the State and provincial governments," said Zheng Renhao, Party chief of the city.

The city aims to connect surrounding areas with countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, and function as a free trade port and a pioneer in the marine economy, he noted.

Located on the west wing of Guangdong — one of the most affluent provinces in China — 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.

In brief, the ambition of the city will be realized through the construction of "a passageway, a free trade port and a pilot zone", Zheng said.

Transportation upgrades

Zhanjiang will upgrade its seaports, airport, railways and highways to build a transport system that can help the construction of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, a major passageway to connect western China with BRI countries and regions.

"Our ports can work as a major channel for goods between Southwest China and the Belt and Road countries and regions. Our position as a regional hub will be strengthened," said Zhanjiang Mayor Jiang Jianjun.

China Merchants Group, a State-owned conglomerate headquartered in Hong Kong, signed a cooperative agreement with the city government of Zhanjiang in 2017, which agreed to invest about 46 billion yuan (\$6.9 billion) to upgrade the city's port facilities, develop marine economy and build a cruise ship terminal.

The local government will kick off a project to upgrade the Zhanjiang deepwater port channel, which will be capable of holding vessels of 400,000 metric tons from the current 300,000 tons, Jiang said. After the improvement, the port will be an international seaway that can handle sea traffic from more than 150 countries and regions.

It is also trying to gain support from the central government to upgrade the bulk cargo terminal at Xiashan Port, Jiang noted. He added that the terminal will be turned into a transit base for international trade goods that can offer the best handling and distribution for the corridor.

The mayor said construction of a new international airport and its supporting projects, including a road and a high-speed rail station to connect the airport with the rest of the city,

Zhanjiang aiming to be first port of call for businesses

City devoted to developing modern coastal economic belt and free trade port to help connect wider area with Belt and Road Initiative



The Golden Sand Beach is a major attraction in Zhanjiang and also a showcase of the city's good environment. CHEN YU / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: Zheng Renhao (second from right, first row), Party chief of Zhanjiang, and Zhanjiang Mayor Jiang Jianjun (second from left, second row) visit a company in Shenzhen during a trip for investment promotion. ZHANG FENGFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY A cruise ship is ready to berth at Zhanjiang Bay. FANG XIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A developing transport system is turning Zhanjiang into a transit base for international trade. LANG SHUCHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

will begin within the year.

The city government is also applying to the nation's aviation authority to develop a pilot area for low-altitude airspace to general aviation.

Wider opening-up

According to the mayor, who is also a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress, the city intends to set up a free trade port.

"We are making every effort to get more experimental policies from the State and provincial governments first applied in Zhanjiang, so that the city can play a more significant role in opening-up in the coastal area of South China," Jiang said.

The local government will first set up a comprehensive bonded zone by the end of this year, then promote the ideas of putting Zhanjiang Port and Donghai Island on the map as a part of the China (Guangdong) Pilot Free Trade Zone, Jiang said. It also intends to explore new cooperation opportunities between Zhanjiang Port and the ports in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Jiang said.

The government will apply to set up a free trade port for commodity exchanges, he added.

While enhancing the union with the Greater Bay Area, the city will develop complementary industries with neighboring Hainan, including port processing and warehouses.

"The logistic cooperation is workable between Zhanjiang and Hainan, so we can join hands to build a commodity exchange center in Zhanjiang and an international shipping exchange in Hainan," Jiang said.

Zhanjiang can also build a warehouse to look after the international trade of Hainan, he added.

Marine economy

As one of China's first 14 coastal opening-up cities, Zhanjiang aims to be a national marine economy demonstration zone, according to the mayor. It will highlight the port industry, coastal tourism, cash crop farming with local characteristics and the union of civil and military industries.

"We will focus on big investment projects and the development of industrial parks — from single projects to a full industrial chain — which will be ultimately developed into a modern industrial system with high-level performance," Jiang said.

German chemical giant BASF will invest a total of \$10 billion to build a chemicals production site on Donghai Island in southeastern Zhanjiang, about 40 kilometers from the city center. This is one of the biggest foreign investments that Zhanjiang has ever received. It is also the single biggest investment project the company has ever made internationally, BASF said.

Last year, Zhanjiang was selected as one of the top 50 cities with the greatest investment potential in China by World Famous Brand Assembly.

Local figures outline their visions for the future

By CHEN HONG

Reacting to this year's Government Work Report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang on March 5, three deputies to the 13th National People's Congress from Zhanjiang, a burgeoning city in western Guangdong province, discussed the development of the city.

Jiang Jianjun, mayor of Zhanjiang

Zhanjiang will take four opportunities arising from the newly released Government Work Report. The first opportunity is from the bigger tax abatement, which can stimulate the manufacturing industry, especially as the city is building a national chemical project on Donghai Island.

The second opportunity is that the country will speed up the construction of key projects, with 800 billion yuan (\$119.2 billion) in rail investment and 1.8 trillion yuan in road and water transport investment.

Zhanjiang will start the construction of three high-speed railways that will connect the city with Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province; Hupu of the neighboring Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region; and Hainan province, which is separated by the Qiongzhou Strait. All the railway projects are expected to get incentive policies from the central government.

The third opportunity is that State-level economic and technological development zones, high-tech industrial development zones and new areas are encouraged to reform and experiment to promote open-



NPC deputies from Zhanjiang talk with the media about the city's development. HE YOUFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Upon the completion of a project to upgrade the deepwater port channel, Zhanjiang Port will be capable of holding vessels of 400,000 metric tons from the current 300,000 tons. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ing-up. Zhanjiang will carry out such reforms and experiments and strive to make Zhanjiang Port and Donghai Island, part of the China (Guangdong) Pilot Free Trade Zone.

The fourth opportunity is from the strategy highlighting regional coordinated devel-

opment. Zhanjiang, as a less-developed city, is expected to benefit from incentive policies in transport infrastructure construction, industrial growth, urban development and government transfer payment so that it can catch up with provincial peers in the short term.

Ning Ling, a development and planning director at Guangdong Ocean University

As a scholar in the field of marine research, I brought nine topics for discussion covering four aspects.

The first aspect is about marine economy development and raising awareness in maritime development.

The second centers on regional development under the Guangdong coastal economic belt program. This includes projects such as the development of Qiongzhou Strait and the free trade ports cooperation between Zhanjiang and African countries.

The third is about rural revitalization and the problem of aging people in villages who live alone and the fourth is on the coordination of teaching and research in the application-oriented university.

Lin Shuixi, vice-chairman of Guangdong Federation of Industry & Commerce and chairman of Jinling Group

The Government Work Report is down-to-earth and practical, which reinforces the confidence of entrepreneurs to make companies bigger. The tax cut and fee reduction policy will benefit the manufacturing industry and the small and micro-sized enterprises. It is a gift from the State to help cut the costs of the companies.

My suggestions this year are mainly on rural revitalization, how to help Zhanjiang better connect with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and seize the opportunities of the national strategic development.



A crop of pineapples grows at a farm in Zhanjiang. CHEN BEIPAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

New villages with an industrial focus planned to fight poverty

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhanjiang will build 40 villages that feature distinctive agriculture, ecology, folk culture and architecture by the end of this year, in an effort to revitalize the rural economy and improve the living standards of farmers, said Mayor Jiang Jianjun.

The pilot project will also allow local villagers to participate in and benefit from a rural program that will combine recycling, innovative agriculture and traditional farming experience, the mayor noted.

"We are conducting the experiments to combine agriculture with tourism," Jiang said.

Located on the Leizhou Peninsula in South China, Zhanjiang is one of the cities in Guangdong province that have the toughest job to relieve poverty.

According to official figures, the city has 218 poverty-stricken villages with a population of 240,000, accounting for one-seventh of the province's total.

"It has been a thorny problem that development in urban and rural areas is unbalanced, but we are considering ways to turn the problem into oppor-

tunities that help all the poor people to live well-off lives," Jiang said.

In another attempt, the city government encourages the county and township administrations to put the poverty-relief fund into industrial projects for poverty alleviation. This would develop a unique industry in each town and grow different products in each village, said the mayor.

"Every person from the poor families, who has working ability, can find a job with these projects. This will be more efficient way to pull them out of poverty," he said.

Since the peninsula has a long farming history, the local government focuses resource to develop several State and provincial-level agriculture demonstration areas and foster a group of strong agricultural companies to lead agricultural development.

For example, it has a State-level pineapple farm in Xuwen and a dragon fruit plantation in Suixi.

Agricultural output of Zhanjiang rose 5.5 percent year-on-year to 78.8 billion yuan (\$11.7 billion) in 2018. Meanwhile, grain yield increased by 3.8 percent to nearly 1.5 million metric tons, according to the official figures.