

Guangdong port economic zone focusing on enhancing international partnerships



Zhanjiang Port, one of China's 25 main coastal ports, can handle 400,000-dead-weight tonnage ships. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

# Zhanjiang building world-class port-based industrial cluster

By HAO NAN

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As one of the country's first coastal open cities, Zhanjiang in South China's Guangdong province is resolutely focused on expanding and enhancing its heavy and petrochemical industries, marine engineering equipment, marine ranching and coastal tourism in an effort to establish a world-class port-based industrial cluster.

Recent strategic moves by the city include ramping up investment promotion and expediting construction of its port economic zone. In November 2024, the provincial government unveiled a comprehensive construction plan for the zone, spanning an area of 148.81 square kilometers, with a development strategy focusing on four key sectors: electronic information; new materials; light industry textiles; and agricultural product import processing. They will be supported by industries such as new energy, marine engineering equipment, shipping logistics and cross-border trade services, forming a modern industrial ecosystem centered around export processing.

The plan also underscores that the port economic zone will harness the advantages of local gigantic projects like Baosteel, the Zhongke refinery and petrochemical project, and BASF's Verbund site.

For example, BASF decided to establish the Verbund project in Zhanjiang in 2022, with a total investment of approximately 10 billion euros (\$10.7 billion). Once operational, it will stand as BASF's third-largest integrated production base globally. The core installation of this project is expected to commence production by the end of this year.

Ding Li, an economic researcher at the Guangdong Academy of Social Sciences, believes that Zhanjiang's future development prospects hinge on transforming the resource advantages brought by these major projects into tangible local economic benefits.



A signing ceremony is held at the Guangdong-ASEAN Industrial Park International Cooperation Alliance and Zhanjiang Port Economic Zone Joint Investment Promotion Conference held in Zhanjiang city on Feb 7.

By 2030, Zhanjiang's port economic zone is projected to gather a cluster of key enterprises, positioning itself as a prime destination for domestic and international industrial relocation and a model for international capacity cooperation.

"We must approach construction of the port economic zone with a sense of urgency and responsibility, accelerating its progress to make Zhanjiang a pivotal growth hub within the modern coastal economic belt and as a provincial sub-central city," said Yu Gang, the city's Party secretary. He emphasized that building the port economic zone represents a significant opportunity for the city to achieve leapfrog development.

Yu highlighted the need to bolster leading industries such as steel and petrochemicals to accelerate growth of the port-based industrial cluster. He said enhancing external industrial partnerships, particularly with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and transforming the Guangdong-ASEAN international cooperation industrial park into a

hub for export processing and services are priorities.

In August 2023, the Guangdong Fenyong ASEAN Industrial Park initiated a collaboration with the China-Vietnam (Shenzhen-Hai Phong) Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, pioneering a new cooperative model for parks within and beyond Guangdong. In February 2024, they jointly proposed establishment of the Guangdong-ASEAN Industrial Park International Cooperation Alliance in Zhanjiang, marking a significant milestone in economic and trade cooperation.

Last month, Thailand's Borthong Industrial Estate joined the alliance, expanding its member parks to 10.

Yu urged Zhanjiang to enhance the business environment and cultivate new strengths for the port economic zone, including improving the transportation and storage capacities of Wushi Port and optimizing the zone's transportation networks. He added that administrative reforms should also be deepened to facilitate cross-border trade and enhance public ser-

vices, while promoting the digital and intelligent development of the zone.

Mou Zhiping, executive vice-mayor of Zhanjiang, said the city's port economic zone, facing the Hainan Free Trade Port across the sea, serves as a gateway for Guangdong to engage with ASEAN. He added that Wushi Port, which is one of the closest seaports from the Chinese mainland to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, boasts unique geographical advantages. With construction conditions for a 100,000-deadweight tonnage wharf and a 200,000-deadweight tonnage shipping channel, Wushi has the potential to emerge as the primary port linking ASEAN countries.

Mou said plans are underway to enhance Zhanjiang's transportation network and establish an agricultural product distribution and deep-processing center, making it a major export processing industrial base and a crucial energy supply hub for Hainan province. The city is also proactively welcoming industrial relocation from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and fostering key industries like energy and marine engineering equipment.

Since 2023, the Zhanjiang port economic zone has attracted 100 industrial projects with a total investment of about 42 billion yuan (\$5.8 billion), including several high-tech, high value-added export processing projects. In 2024 alone, it secured 65 manufacturing projects, with a total investment of over 24 billion yuan.

Tang Zhongping, president of Guangdong Bihui Industrial, said: "When considering business development, factors like commuting logistics and land costs are critical. The Zhanjiang port economic zone's proximity to the ASEAN region ensures low logistics costs and smooth operations, offering an ideal environment for establishing a high-end eyewear industrial park locally."

## Beautiful Bay Initiative bolsters ecological governance

By WANG JINHUI

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Guided by China's Beautiful Bay Initiative, Zhanjiang is making significant strides in integrated land-sea governance and marine ecological protection.

Guan Hui, director of the Zhanjiang ecology and environmental bureau, said the fundamental criteria for a beautiful bay include clean waters and pristine beaches, a thriving ecosystem rich in marine life, and a harmonious balance between human activities and nature, ensuring a high-quality marine environment for the public.

Zhanjiang's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for Marine Ecological Protection designates the Beautiful Bay Initiative as a key priority. The plan divides the city's 1,616.53-kilometer coastline into eight distinct bay zones, further breaking them down into smaller regulatory units to refine governance and management strategies.

The city has already completed the Golden Coast project in Wuchuan and is accelerating the development of Sanji Bay in Leizhou and Wailuo Bay in Xuwen.

In 2021, the Chikan-Xiashan section of Zhanjiang Bay was recognized as an outstanding Beautiful Bay site. Further cementing the city's leadership in marine conservation, Zhanjiang's Jinsha Bay was included in the third batch of national Beautiful Bay cases released by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in December 2024 — one of the only three bays in Guangdong to have received that national designation since 2021.

### Marine rehabilitation

In recent years, Zhanjiang has been focusing on mangrove restoration, marine ecological rehabilitation and a sustainable land-sea integration model that ensures responsible utilization of resources. Its coastline includes 330.98 km of sandy shores, and in 2024, the city launched multiple public beach-cleaning initiatives.

Mangrove conservation, given its crucial role in maintaining biodiversity and coastal resilience, is likewise a priority. Zhanjiang has the Chinese mainland's largest coastal mangrove coverage, and since 2019, the city has afforested 1,576 hectares and

restored 1,126 hectares of it. As the first city in Guangdong to enact local regulations for mangrove wetland protection, Zhanjiang has pioneered a carbon inclusion methodology for mangrove ecosystems, filling a national regulatory gap.

In June 2021, Zhanjiang completed China's first "blue carbon" trading project, signing an agreement to transfer 5,880 metric tons of carbon reduction credits, transforming the ecological benefits of mangroves into monetary value.

Through ongoing comprehensive restoration projects along the Jinsha Bay coastline and coastal wetlands, Zhanjiang is continuously enhancing its landscape, while at the same time improving environmental quality and raising living standards for local residents.

According to Feng Jiachao, an official from the Zhanjiang marine and fisheries bureau, the city is integrating ecological enhancements into its marine conservation initiatives. It has completed 1.8 km of eco-friendly seawall reconstruction on Xinliao Island, Xuwen, and is accelerating construction of a 3-km eco-seawall in Huguang town, Mazhang district.

Notably, Zhanjiang is the first city in China to introduce a market-driven approach to seawall ecological transformation. In 2023, the country's first coastal land-use quota transaction was completed on the Guangdong provincial trading platform when in Tiaofeng town, Leizhou, two villages auctioned 22.8 meters of coastal quota at a rate of 200,000 yuan (\$27,510) per meter, generating a total transaction value of 4.56 million yuan. This marked a significant achievement in Guangdong's coastline compensation system, which was introduced in 2017.

"We plan to introduce private capital to support ecological restoration efforts and collaborate with research institutions to drive technological advancements in seawall ecological transformation," Feng said.

Since 2023, over 95 percent of Zhanjiang's nearshore waters have maintained excellent water quality, ranking among the highest in Guangdong. Thanks to its well-preserved marine ecosystem, Leizhou Bay has become a vital habitat for nearly 1,000 Chinese white dolphins, one of the world's rarest marine species.



Zhanjiang boasts a sandy coastline of 330.98 kilometers, a rich resource for the city. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

## What they say

**Editor's note:** Deputies from Zhanjiang to the ongoing session of the National People's Congress hailed this year's Government Work Report on Wednesday.

The policy mix that combines fiscal and monetary measures has sent a very positive signal this year, bringing a key development window for Zhanjiang. Leveraging its marine resources and strategic advantages, the city is building a modern marine industrial system.

Zhanjiang must plan ahead for its port economic zone, support emerging steel and petrochemical industries, nurture future industries and advance the high-end, intelligent and green transformation of traditional industries such as food, household appliances and home goods.

**Ning Ling**, vice-president of Guangdong Ocean University



Ports are fundamental and pivotal facilities that serve as an important foundation for economic development. As a traditional industry, the only way

for ports to achieve high-quality development is through innovation.

Zhanjiang Port must leverage its advantages and support the con-

struction of the green and clean energy base in the city's Donghai Island. The base will not only cater to the island's industrial needs but provide an impetus for the city's clean energy industry.

**Liu Bin**, board chairman of Zhanjiang Port Group

The Guangdong water resources allocation project in the Beibu Gulf region has entered its full-scale construction stage. Upon completion, it will expand the irrigation area in western Guangdong by 123,300 hectares, ensuring water security for people in western Guangdong. I hope the project will advance the second-phase planning and construction to further stabilize grain production and planting areas.

**Lin Jiaru**, chairman of Guangdong Dongnong Industry

The aquaculture industry in

Zhanjiang has entered a new phase of development. Only through technological innovation, can the aquaculture industry shift its focus from quantity to quality and efficiency and better address issues such as structural adjustments in aquaculture species and the optimization of the aquaculture operation scale.

Zhanjiang aims to promote industrial upgrades through digital aquaculture and optimization in fish larvae cultivation, thereby establishing a modern fishery system.

**Cheng Kaimin**, technology director of Guangdong Yuehai Feeds Group

We will continue to deepen the modernization of the sugar industry chain and construct a new agricultural product distribution system, while enhancing the digitalization and intelligence level of the industry chain to promote the development of modern characteristic agricultur-

al industries and create more characteristic regional brands.

We will also expand our rural culture and tourism business to build a wellness resort and boost the rural tourism industry in the city.

**Lin Shuixi**, chairman of Jinling Group

According to the strategic positioning of the city's port economic zone, we are pushing forward with an integrated source-grid-load-storage demonstration project of green-electricity direct supply, aiming to create a green zero-carbon park.

This project will boost mechanism innovation in zero-carbon parks and accelerate the development of export enterprises, increasing both the economic benefits and competitiveness of the parks.

**Ren Jiajiong**, engineer of Guangdong Datang International Leizhou Power Generation