

Modernization at core of city's growth

Zhanjiang looks to future after advancements of 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) lift economy

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhanjiang, a port city in South China's Guangdong province, is undergoing rapid transformation and growth. This was highlighted by local officials on Monday during the annual gatherings of the Guangdong Provincial People's Congress and the Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Yu Gang, secretary of the CPC Zhanjiang committee, described the development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25) as a milestone for the city. With a commitment to sustainable industrial growth, regional collaboration and urban development, Zhanjiang has emerged as a key player in advancing China's modernization.

According to Yu, over the past five years, Zhanjiang has developed an industrial framework known as the "Four Greens and One Blue", focusing on green advancements in steel, petrochemicals, energy and food production, alongside the development of its marine economy. Through this approach, the city has created a dynamic, eco-friendly economic structure.

The green petrochemical and modern agricultural and food industries, each surpassing annual production values of 100 billion yuan (\$14.4 billion), served as core economic engines in the past five years. Zhanjiang led Guangdong in the number of gravity-based net cages and large-scale aquaculture platforms for marine ranching. It ranked third in the province for marine economic competitiveness.

Meanwhile, Zhanjiang ranked fourth for its business environment in Guangdong. Infrastructure projects such as the Zhanjiang Wuchuan International Airport, the waterway for 400,000-deadweight-ton vessels at Zhanjiang Port, and the Guangzhou-Zhanjiang high-speed rail services have enhanced regional connectivity, ushering in new economic opportunities.

The High-Quality Development Project for Guangdong Counties, Towns and Villages has fostered coordinated growth across urban and rural areas, with eight counties or county-level regions passing inspections over the past five years.

Advancements such as e-commerce growth in Suixi county, distinctive industrial clusters in the county-level cities of Lianjiang and Wuchuan, and marine biopharmaceuticals in Xiashan district have invigorated local economies. Zhanjiang's unique agricultural products have gained nationwide popularity, with prepackaged meals now generating more than 10 billion yuan in annual production. The city ranked first in Guangdong for both the number of national-level modern agricultural industry parks and

farmer cooperatives as of 2025.

At the heart of Zhanjiang's transformation is its commitment to improving the well-being of its residents. During the past five years, the city created more than 300,000 urban jobs and advanced critical water resource projects including the Guangdong Water Resources Allocation Project around the Beibu Gulf.

Environmental achievements, including the designation of the Jinsha Bay and the Bomaogang Bay as National Beautiful Bays, highlight Zhanjiang's dedication to sustainability. Additionally, its innovative mangrove carbon sequestration serves as a model for ecological restoration nationwide. These efforts collectively depict a city fostering economic growth while ensuring local residents' quality of life.

Beyond industry, Zhanjiang has leveraged its strategic geographic advantage, connecting eastern and western China while linking northern and southern regions, and fostering international collaboration. Aligning its development with Hainan province and integrating into the construction of the New Western Land-Sea Corridor, Zhanjiang has embraced national policies to deepen reforms and spark innovation.

As the southernmost coastal city on the Chinese mainland, Zhanjiang has been tasked with fostering deeper collaboration with Hainan, China's southernmost island province and the country's largest special economic zone, via the Qiongzhou Strait.

Zhanjiang Mayor Li Yongyi outlined five areas of focus for deepening partnerships across the strait, emphasizing collaboration mechanisms, infrastructure development, industrial coordination, economic collaboration and shared public services.

To achieve this, Zhanjiang is enhancing cooperation frameworks and securing national policy support. Its efforts include fostering leadership exchanges and building a coordinated cross-regional work mechanism. This collaboration extends to creating an integrated "sea-land-air-rail" transport network, with projects such as the development of a "half-hour transportation circle" across the Qiongzhou Strait.

Zhanjiang aims to become a key driver of Guangdong's coastal economy, aspiring to join the province's economic top tier by 2030 under the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Its future work will focus on six pillars: industry, ecology, safety, tourism, civility and residents' well-being. The local government has outlined a comprehensive plan to enhance modern industrialization, public services and sustainability, while fostering a culture of unity and efficiency among government officials.



From left: The Jinsha Bay in Zhanjiang, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY A vessel leaves the passenger/cargo ro-ro terminal at Xuwen Port, Zhanjiang, for Hainan province. PENG DECAI / FOR CHINA DAILY



What they say

Zhanjiang has designated 2026 as the Year of Reform Enhancement, which aligns well with local realities. The goal is to decisively break free from entrenched mindsets and path dependency, dismantle vested interests, transcend self-interest and implement innovative reforms to truly deliver fresh transformations.

Liu Wei, mayor of Wuchuan city, Zhanjiang

In 2025, DeepSeek made a groundbreaking debut, redefining the global artificial intelligence landscape. As the hometown of DeepSeek's founder, Liang Wenfeng, Zhanjiang must not miss this sweeping AI wave. The city will promote the integration of AI with industry, public services and social governance.

Chen Yuhua, director of Potou district's bureau of government services and data administration, Zhanjiang

The spotlight of sports events has illuminated Zhanjiang. We must transform the popularity of these events into prosperity for the city and convert the traffic generated by sports into enhanced urban development. Together, we aim to elevate the integration of sports with culture and tourism to new heights.

Liang Siqiao, vice-chairman of the Zhanjiang Federation of Industry and Commerce

Zhanjiang boasts three ecological icons: the Chinese white dolphins, mangroves and "Zhanjiang Blue". With its year-round spring-like weather, fresh air, blue skies, lush greenery, delicious seafood and abundant resources, Zhanjiang is an ideal place for entrepreneurship, investment and living, as well as a prime destination for tourists.

Dong Fujin, chairman of Zhanjiang Shenhan Technology Industrial

The Guangdong Water Resources Allocation Project around the Beibu Gulf and its second phase, which are aimed at addressing the long-standing water scarcity problem of the Leizhou Peninsula, are crucial to the future of Zhanjiang. The central government's recent inclusion of large-scale irrigation projects in the Leizhou Peninsula and other areas in its 2026 plan is highly encouraging news. We must translate these policies into construction progress, financial investment and tangible results.

Li Dan, chairwoman of Guangdong Minghuang Tea

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Zhanjiang, a major hub for China's marine economy, has embraced a dual focus on developing its marine economy while protecting its ecology, achieving a balance between economic growth and sustainability.

The city has maintained its leading position in marine fishery output and value in Guangdong province for 30 years. Serving as a stabilizer for high-quality development, its marine economy ranked 19th nationwide and third in Guangdong in terms of competitiveness in 2025.

According to Zhao Gang, director of the Zhanjiang ocean and fisheries bureau, Zhanjiang's gross marine product grew by 47.51 billion yuan (\$6.83 billion) from 2020 to 2024, marking a 56.7 percent increase. The marine economy's contribution to GDP rose from 27 percent to 34.2 percent, making it a key driver of the city's growth.

Zhanjiang's marine ranching efforts have also emerged as a key component of that economy. Home to four deep-sea net cage aquaculture clusters — Zhanjiang Bay, Leizhou Bay, Liusha Bay and Caotan Bay — the city boasts a total aquaculture volume of 18.6 million cubic meters, accounting for 35 percent of Guangdong's large aquaculture platforms.

Building on these strengths, Zhanjiang has become a hub of marine innovation, drawing upon resources provided by Guangdong Ocean University and Zhanjiang Bay Laboratory. Breakthroughs in the localized artificial breeding technology of key

Marine economy advancing sustainably



Left: Zhanjiang Bay Laboratory. HE QIRUI / FOR CHINA DAILY Above: Chinese white dolphins swim in Zhanjiang waters. WU DONGJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

species, such as the Naozhou golden pomfret, and expanded breeding success across eight species underscore the city's expertise. With 480 seedling farms — 23.6 percent of Guangdong's total — Zhanjiang has established itself as the province's leading center for marine seed innovation.

In equipment manufacturing, the launch of Zhanjiang Bay No 1, the world's first floating dynamic positioning aquaculture platform, heralds a new era of smart deep-sea aquaculture. Alongside harvests from large aquaculture platforms, including the Hawii series, Hengyi No 1 and Zhannong No 1, Zhanjiang is leading in modern marine ranching for scale and technological

advancement in the province.

Zhanjiang exports aquatic products to more than 40 countries and regions. Its marine industries encompass fisheries, oil and gas, chemicals, and tourism, each contributing over 10 billion yuan in added value to the economy. Marine tourism is experiencing the fastest growth, at a rate of 17.49 percent.

Emerging industries, such as marine pharmaceuticals and bio-products, have also shown potential, growing by 23.31 percent over the past five years. The city's port industry cluster has witnessed significant advancements as well, driven by projects on Donghai Island, including that of Zhongke (Guangdong) Refinery and Petrochemical, forming a

coastal industrial cluster with output exceeding 100 billion yuan.

Zhanjiang remained steadfast in its commitment to ecological priorities and green development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), Zhao emphasized. The city has adopted innovative and eco-friendly aquaculture models such as the "mangroves and green crabs" and "shellfish and algae" mixed farming systems. A three-dimensional aquaculture framework of underwater, midwater and surface farming ensures a sustainable balance between fisheries and water resources.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Zhanjiang planted 2,418 hectares of mangroves and restored

1,404 hectares, bringing the total area to 6,667.79 hectares — 21.5 percent of the national total.

In addition to its ecological achievements, Zhanjiang has implemented a marine monitoring system, enabling real-time tracking of water quality and ecological indicators to manage environmental risks such as algae. The city has also promoted ecological tourism initiatives, including attractions such as the "Edge of the Sea" boardwalk.

According to Cen Jian, president of the Zhanjiang Association of Aquatic Products Import & Export, the city will leverage its marine resources to transform into a distinctive modern marine city. To that end, the city plans to optimize the layout of its

marine economy. By focusing on industry chains and spatial arrangements, Zhanjiang seeks to enhance its marine industry framework, forming a modern marine enterprise matrix. Efforts include fostering interconnected industry chains, promoting high-value segments, and enhancing industrial resilience.

The city also aims to achieve breakthroughs in key technologies and encourage the implementation of advancements, particularly in aquatic breeding innovation, maritime equipment research and development, and smart ocean exploration. These efforts are designed to transform the marine economy from being resource-driven to being innovation-driven.

Zhanjiang's focus extends to enhancing its marine economy branding while championing green and sustainable practices. Leveraging its strengths in port-side industries, marine biopharmaceuticals and marine engineering equipment, the city will expand its industrial influence while developing unique coastal tourism offerings to become an international destination.

At the same time, Zhanjiang will continue championing green, low-carbon growth in its marine economy. With a focus on balancing development and ecological protection, the city is advancing marine restoration, sustainable aquaculture and a new energy system, paving the way for a more sustainable and successful future.