

CHINA

Poet finds inspiration in artists' village

New focus raises living standards and improves cultural offerings

By YANG JUN in Guiyang and CHEN MEILING

Yan Xi, a poet from Beijing, said there are two places a person should go in their lives: "One is Paris, a city of romance, another is Hongjiang, a primitive place where time has not begun."

Located in deep mountains, Hongjiang village in Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, in Guizhou province, is set in pastoral surroundings where hundreds of traditional Bouyei-ethnic style buildings are surrounded by bushy forests, rolling hills and farmland.

Yan said the serene, isolated village helps his writing. "Immersed in mountains and starlight, and strolling along the terraces, inspiration flows naturally, which brings me to a new creative realm," he said.

As part of a local cultural and poverty-reduction program, Yan bought a deserted house and renovated it, creating a personal library filled with romantic poetry, historical documents and reviews from home and abroad that is open to anyone interested in visiting.

Once desolate and poor, most of Hongjiang's young migrated to big cities where there are more job opportunities, leaving behind the elderly, children, dogs, ducks and empty houses. In 2016, local authorities decided to turn Hongjiang into an art village by encouraging residents to sell unused houses to artists as part of efforts to reduce poverty, develop cultural tourism and promote rural revitalization.

So far 108 painters, poets, sculptors, scriptwriters, film directors,



musicians from around the country have bought about 100 houses and renovated them. There are now art galleries, music and painting workshops, and classrooms for poetry and pottery. "It's a win-win," said Zeng Hongbo, Party secretary of Hongjiang. "Artists have a quiet, close-to-nature space for creation and the incomes of villagers increase by selling houses and working to refurbish them. There is also more culture and entertainment in the village to enrich their lives."

Liu Songtian, a 57-year-old sculptor and music enthusiast from Beijing, now spends half his life in his two-story brick house in Hongjiang. "Living in the village gives me more space to relax and think, and inspires me artistically," he said.

While wandering around, he noticed that as most farmwork is now mechanized, old farm tools are no longer used. For example, villagers now use rice buckets as flower

pots, tables or bath buckets at home.

Liu then discovered that the buckets are made of platan wood — a material commonly used to make the *pipa*, a Chinese lute with four strings, and the *guzheng*, a Chinese zither. The wood is known for its acoustic quality, so he came up with the idea of transforming the old tools into musical instruments.

He collected as many as he could, and has even turned abandoned boats and windmills into instruments.

The program also benefits villagers. So far, old houses have been sold to artists for more than 2.8 million yuan (\$430,000) and the income of the house renovation team now tops 2 million yuan annually.

Besides workshops, an art communication center, a village history museum, and a children's art educational center have also been built. The rural artistic village brand attracts tourists and about

260 residents now have jobs in catering, accommodations, house restoration and other cultural services, as a result.

Wei Weiyi, 43, was the first to sell his house to an artist in 2016. The property, now a homestay, sold for about 10,000 yuan. Wei, who worked in construction outside the village for more than 10 years, decided to return to earn money by helping buyers repair their new houses.

While chatting with a ceramicist one day, Wei showed interest in the work. In 2018 and 2019, he studied ceramics at a college in Guiyang, provincial capital of Guizhou, which was arranged by the village government. Together with other artists, he invested 50,000 yuan of his own money to open a ceramics workshop in the village to teach villagers and tourists to make pottery.

He also turned some rooms in his house into a bed-and-breakfast, with sheets and duvets made from batik, a



Left: Encircled by mountains and paddy fields, Hongjiang village in Qiannan Bouyei and Miao autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province, is set in pastoral surroundings. **Above:** Li Huixi poses with members of the children's soccer team he and Xu Tao founded at Hongjiang. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

traditional dyeing technique that is especially popular in southern China and Southeast Asia.

He began to make about 40,000 yuan a year, more than double his earnings at his former job. "Artists helped raise recognition of the village and brought more possibilities for development. The future of Hongjiang will be different, as will our next generation," he said.

The villagers' appreciation for art is changing, too. Liu said he is happy that some are beginning to add decorations to their houses after helping renovate others. "I always feel welcome here. Though we have different opinions on aesthetics, we learn from each other."

He has organized numerous art exhibitions, forums and parties, as well as pottery and sculpture classes at his house.

Li Huixi and Xu Tao founded a 60-member children's soccer team. They also organized art lessons,

and some of the creations were shown on the Disney store's big screen in New York's Times Square during a promotion for China's National Day last year. "The purpose was to build confidence and allow people outside the mountains to see their work," Li said.

Yan, meanwhile, has been nicknamed the "grandpa with white whiskers" by village children. He has run two poetry workshops for students and said he plans to organize a literature competition at the house, to which international poets will be invited.

He would like to teach poetry more regularly, if there were enough students. He has become part of village life over the years.

Wang Jin in Guiyang contributed to this story.

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Development district sees strong progress in construction, investment

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Guangzhou Development District has made strong progress in constructing 500 megaprojects in 10 major industries this year, despite the lingering slowdowns from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gu Xiaobin, chief economist of GDD, said the district will complete investment valued at 129.1 billion yuan (\$19.97 billion) for the projects this year.

"Construction of the 500 megaprojects that cost more than 1.23 trillion yuan was aimed at building GDD into a major production base of innovation as well as new and high-tech industries in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area in the years to come," Gu said at a news conference on Friday.

To promote and speed up construction of the megaprojects, GDD has organized nine rounds of group contract signing and construction commencement ceremonies for the megaprojects since late 2019.

The megaprojects are expected to play a big part in accelerating economic growth in GDD and the entire city in the following years, Gu said.

GDD deems the megaprojects a present for celebrating the 100th birthday of the Communist Party of China on July 1, he said.

Of the projects, 29 reach an investment scale of more than 10 billion yuan each and 166 have an investment scale of more than 1 billion yuan each, Gu said.

Located in the eastern part of Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, GDD in the prosperous Pearl River Delta is now home to a myriad of well-known foreign and domestic companies involved in the industries, which include artificial intelligence, biomedicine, chips, information, 5G, smart manufacturing, big data, new energy, new materials, culture, education, tourism and related cutting-edge technologies.

With more than 3,000 biomedicine companies, GDD has become a new innovation and production base of Guangdong province's biomedicine industry. The district's



From left: Guangzhou Science City is a modern science park in Guangzhou Development District. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area national technological innovation center. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

industrial production scale in the biomedicine industry is expected to reach more than 100 billion yuan in the coming years.

Earlier this year, biotech company BeiGene kicked off construction on its fourth plant in GDD, playing a role in helping build the district into one of the largest production bases for anti-cancer drugs in Asia.

With the completion of its fourth plant, BeiGene's anti-cancer production capacity will come to more than 120,000 liters, with its maximum capacity reaching 200,000 liters.

That expanded capacity will make it one of the largest anti-cancer drug production bases in Asia.

Construction of the megaprojects have further spurred the industrial development of GDD in the previous years.

According to Gu, those manufacturing enterprises each with annual business revenue surpassing 20 million yuan in the district realized total industrial output of more than 800 billion yuan and GDD posted a commodity sales volume of more than 970 billion yuan last year.

Yang Yuanshi, director of the district's reform and development bureau, said the GDD's GDP grew 20.6 percent year-on-year in the

500 megaprojects

under construction in Guangzhou Development District

first quarter of 2021, which is faster than the average growth of the country, Guangdong province and Guangzhou city.

GDD's total finance and taxation revenue increased by 31 percent year-on-year and the profit of enterprises grew by 88.7 percent year-on-year in the first five months of 2021.

And it is expected to keep its strong momentum in the following months, he said.

According to Chen Weiquan, director of the district's bureau of science and technology, the bureau will try to build GDD into a destination with a powerful strategic science and technology force, dynamic industrial technology innovation system and attractive ecological environment in the coming years. He promised to better serve the scientific and technological companies that settle down in GDD.

Xu Dan, director of the district's bureau of industry and information, said the bureau will provide

space element support for high-quality development of the manufacturing industry in GDD through new land planning, developing new industries and accelerating reconstruction and upgrade in the coming months.

When all the megaprojects have been completed and production starts, they are expected to earn revenues of more than 1 trillion yuan in the future, driving the district's industrial production and sales volume of commodities to exceed 1 trillion yuan respectively.

Meanwhile, construction of the megaprojects also helped drive fixed asset investment to grow 18.2 percent year-on-year in 2020 and 61 percent year-on-year in the first five months of 2021.

To further promote the development of new and high-tech and innovative technologies, GDD is sparing no effort to attract high-quality talents from home and abroad.

Famous scientists and academicians, including Zhong Nanshan, Zhang Boli and Shi Yigong, have set up their labs, research institutes and companies to begin their research and production in GDD, Gu said.

The district is also speeding up its education industrial development by attracting renowned col-

leges and universities from home and abroad to build their campuses.

Having attracted renowned domestic and foreign schools to settle down in the district, the district has now increased its enrollment by more than 63,000 students.

And the research institutes of Central University of Finance and Economics, Xidian University and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies have also begun recruiting new students.

GDD is also accelerating the preparation and construction of Huangpu University and Guangzhou Jiaotong University to further integrate the development of industrial development and scientific research with higher education.

To achieve the goal, the district is also speeding up construction of infrastructural facilities to further improve the district's living and working environment.

In addition to advanced highway networks that link the district to ports, railway stations and airports in the southern Chinese region, GDD is accelerating construction of the eastern extension line of the district's rail transit line 5 and the second phase of the district's rail transit line 7 as well as other major communication projects and facilities.

The district's mileage of rail tran-

sit will be increased from 66.6 kilometers to 149.6 km, an increase of 124.6 percent, when the two rail transit projects are completed.

Construction of a branch of Nanfang Hospital, a major hospital in Guangzhou, and the Affiliated Women and Children's Hospital of Guangzhou Medical University, is now nearly completed and they will increase inpatient beds more than 50 percent.

Meanwhile, the district has planned to construct more than 46.5 km of greenways while building a number of ecological civilization demonstration zones, civilization villages and modern agricultural parks, through reconstruction of its old downtown areas in the following years.

The improved public facilities have helped transform the district from an industrial development zone into one of the major destinations suitable for business startups, innovation, living and working in the southern Chinese region.

GDD now has a permanent population of more than 1.26 million, an increase of 430,000, or 52 percent, when compared to the figure recorded a decade ago.

The proportion of the population with at least a university education level has doubled.