



Zhanjiang sets aim for high-quality development



Top: The government of Zhanjiang in South China's Guangdong province is dedicated to developing characteristic agriculture. **Above:** A roadshow on the application of digital technologies is held in Zhanjiang on July 30. The event promoted high-quality development of the city through digitalization.

Rural vitalization, economic growth powering city

By **CHEN HONG**
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The government of Zhanjiang, a subcenter of Guangdong province in South China, will highlight the industrialization, digitalization and ecological development of its fast-growing economy, said top city officials.

The city, located at the western part of Guangdong, was once less developed but has now ushered in a new area as its GDP surpassed 300 billion yuan (\$46.3 billion), a widely-recognized benchmark for a faster economic expansion.

"We found the reform dynamics lie in the integrated development of the industrialization, ecology and digitalization," said Liu Hongbing, Party secretary of Zhanjiang, during a Party plenary meeting in the city in late July.

The synergy will take place in the city's increasing efforts in the coming years in the fields of industrial park construction, cultural and tourism programs and the increasing application of big data, he noted.

According to the government's blueprint, the city will build the province's largest industrial park, which

will use an area of 620 square kilometers along with the ports to develop port-related industries.

Meanwhile, industrial parks in different districts and counties of Zhanjiang will contribute at least three industrial clusters with an annual output of 100 billion yuan each focusing on green petrochemicals, advanced materials and automobiles, as well as a group of industrial clusters that could generate an annual output of 10 billion yuan each.

The city will fully explore its cultural and tourism resources — long coastline, fancy natural scenery, long history and diversified folk customs — to make it a world-class tourism destination.

As a pilot city in China that was firstly equipped with a 5G network, Zhanjiang is seizing the opportunity to develop big data and integrate it with industry, agriculture, service and social security.

Also, a city with a big number of rural residents, which accounts for 62 percent of the city's total population, Zhanjiang will beef up its efforts to develop rural modernization in the next five years, said Mayor Zeng Jinze.

Relying on the city's industrial strength, the local government plans to allocate more resources to develop the deep processing of agricultural and sideline products, extend the

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production chain, enhance the added value and thus generate a rising number of agricultural brands with local characteristics.

Besides the development of smart agriculture, the government will help agricultural manufacturing, processing and circulation with the internet of things, big data and artificial intelligence, Zeng said.

Both the rural vitalization and urban economic development are in need of a pool of quality industrial workers, he noted.

The city hosted the opening ceremony of the second Guangdong Vocational Skills Competition on Aug 9. The competition, sponsored by Guangdong provincial government, will last from August to early December. It has set up a total of 141

competition events that cover areas including modern manufacturing, strategic emerging industries and modern services, making it the largest scale and the most influential event of its kind to be held in Guangdong to date.

The champions of different events will represent Guangdong to attend the national vocational skills competition by the year's end, according to the organizer.

"Zhanjiang can learn from other cities to improve its performance in training and managing technical talents, who can provide strong support for the city's rapid economic development," said Party secretary Liu during the opening ceremony.

In fact, a group of significant new investment in the fields of petrochemicals, steel production, paper making as well as the government's generous input in transportation and infrastructure have created jobs, which is becoming more attractive to technical workers.

In the first half of this year, Zhanjiang's GDP surged by 14.2 percent year-on-year to reach 162.0 billion yuan, official figures show. The industrial added-value of companies with at least 20 million yuan core business earnings jumped nearly 30 percent to nearly 41.3 billion yuan, ranking third in terms of growth rate among all the major cities in Guangdong.

Provincial program helps create new opportunities

By **CHEN HONG**

The Zhanjiang government in South China's Guangdong is making the most of a provincial scheme to train and find employment for more cooks, with one local chef taking the scheme to the next level.

Gao Fei, one of the most influential chefs in Zhanjiang who owns and operates 16 restaurants in the port city, used the "Cantonese Cuisine Master" program to set up a workshop to train aspiring cooks in Suixi county in July 2019.

However, not only did Gao train cooks he also formed exclusive cooperation among rural farmers to procure food specific to the needs of his restaurants, resulting in the improved livelihoods of people in rural areas.

According to the agreements, Gao's restaurants would source fresh vegetables, including taros, sweet potatoes, peppers, bitter melons and beans, as well as rice and goats raised in the village of Hutoupo in Suixi.

In 2019, around 110 households



A pastry chef from Zhanjiang makes creative desserts during the second Guangdong Vocational Skills Competition. **ZHANG FENG FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY**

in the village were targeted for poverty alleviation efforts.

To ensure food safety, Gao set up strict requirements for farmers to follow.

For example, they were not allowed to use insecticides or

herbicides and all produce must be picked at a designated size to ensure the best flavor.

In return, Gao's restaurants purchased the produce at a higher price, with some as much as double the average price, said Cai

Xiaojun, who is in charge of overseeing operations at the vegetable plantation base.

"The farmers benefit from the cooperation greatly and need not worry about the market price, all while their pay is getting higher," Cai said.

"More importantly, the strict requirements of master Gao prompted the villagers to pursue a more scientific plantation style and keep improving the quality of the farm products," he noted.

Under the circumstances, the farm products of the village have become more competitive in the market and now also supply hotels and some wholesale markets outside the province, Cai said.

So far, the plantation base covers a land area of about 26.7 hectares, of which 10 hectares have been turned into greenhouses, he added.

Besides earnings from the farm products, the villagers are also paid for their work and for the rental of the land.

In 2020, all the 114 poverty-stricken households in the village received an accumulative divi-

Government ensures training for employees

By **CHEN HONG**

With an influx of investment in Zhanjiang, a burgeoning port city in South China's Guangdong province, the local government has attached great importance to training skilled workers to meet industrial needs.

According to the Zhanjiang human resources and social security bureau, this year a total of 1,166 technical graduates and professionals joined companies that have significantly invested in Zhanjiang in the sectors of steel production, petrochemicals and paper making.

It is essential to guarantee the ample supply of qualified technicians, which is a way to prop up the quality development of the city's manufacturing industry, said a senior official from the bureau.

As a result, the city is expanding the capacity of its technical colleges and improving the quality of vocational education, said the official.

So far, the city has two provincial-level technical colleges, three city-level technical schools and one county-level technical school, with a total of 15,000 full-time students, official figures show.

The local government will promote cooperation between the technical schools and large companies, such as Baosteel Zhanjiang Iron and Steel, BASF and branches of Siemens for joint educational programs.

The government will subsidize an apprentice training system specially designed for new technicians and skilled workers who have signed labor contracts of at least one year with a key company.

Under the system, new technicians will learn from two teachers — one from the company and the other from a vocational school — and receive online and offline training for one to two years.

The system aims to train medium-to-high-level technical workers to meet their working requirements, said the official.

The training includes profes-

230,000 workers

in Zhanjiang received vocational training sponsored by the city's human resources and social security department from 2016 to 2020

sional know-know, practical skills and safety guidelines, while the spirit of craftsmanship will be highlighted.

"It is good for both the industrial upgrading of the companies and the development of the workers," said the official.

According to official figures, about 230,000 workers received vocational training sponsored by the city's human resources and social security department from 2016 to 2020, which allocated roughly 280 million yuan (\$43.2 million) in subsidies for the training.

Luo Bin, vice-principal of Zhanjiang Technician College, said the college has taken international standards as its benchmark in training students and keeps a close eye on the latest industrial developments and talents needed in the market.

Founded in 1957, the college is the largest of its kind in the city and has about 10,300 full-time students.

Luo said the college will keep pace with the changing industrial landscape of the city and arrange new disciplines.

It has developed academic research and teaching in the fields of numerical control machining, mold manufacturing, electrical engineering and vehicle maintenance, Luo said.

The college also offers courses in the fields of industrial robots, 3D printing and new energy vehicle maintenance, said Luo.

Chen Xuejun, who is a master technician at national level, said the students have the opportunity to study and practice in real-life scenarios such as using smart manufacturing equipment.

He noted that many students in the vocational schools are from rural areas.

"They are learning in vocational schools and will grow to be excellent workers. Their lives can be greatly improved," he said.



A competitor operates equipment at the second Guangdong Vocational Skills Competition. **ZHANG FENG FENG / FOR CHINA DAILY**

dend of 680,000 yuan (\$105,240) and were lifted out of poverty, Cai told reporters.

For Gao Fei, procuring the freshest ingredients is just the beginning.

"There are so many things we could do that keep me excited all the time," said Gao, who showed up at the sideline of a vocational skills competition that was held from Aug 9 to 11 in Zhanjiang to share his experiences.

His workshop has trained around 300 cooks since its establishment, many of whom were farmers before. They have received offers for key positions at Gao's restaurants and many other catering companies in and out of Zhanjiang.

Gao is fascinated by discovering hidden valuable products and promoting them. For example, the rice cultivated in Hutoupo is a very special species that grows on coastal wetlands where the salt water and fresh water meet. It has a low yield and contains selenium which is good for health.

Gao carefully designed and packaged the rice and developed several new dishes using it to serve at his restaurants, which gained market attention.

With his promotion, the price

of the rice was raised from 9 yuan per kilogram to 15 yuan per kg in just two years, in which the villagers also shared the rising profits.

"I am able to find out the real value of the local food. It's also a move to educate the villagers to change their plantation ideas to focus on quality, which is vital to revitalize the rural economy," Gao said.

What's more, he has turned the area where his workshop is located into a rural tourism destination, where tourists can buy quality farm products from the villagers, learn cooking skills from Gao himself and his students, enjoy delicious food while spending a relaxed weekend or just holiday in the countryside.

Gao's move has been inspired by Cantonese Cuisine Masters, the program launched by the provincial government in 2018, to train cooks from rural areas and expand the influence of Cantonese cuisine around the country.

Official figures show that about 200,000 Cantonese cuisine cooks in Guangdong received training over the past few years, while the program has created at least 500,000 job opportunities.