

# City looks beyond borders to advance BRI

Zhanjiang adopts international perspective to assist trade, development

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Zhanjiang has been pulling out all the stops to advance the development of the Belt and Road Initiative over the past decade, local officials said.

During the process, the city in South China's Guangdong province has been strengthening economic, trade and personnel exchanges and cooperation with BRI-involved countries and regions, accelerating infrastructure construction, improving investment and financing systems, and boosting people-to-people connectivity.

Zhanjiang is the closest prefecture-level city in Guangdong to Vietnam, a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is also a pivotal city in the Belt and Road Initiative regarding maritime cooperation.

Backed by convenient transportation and continuously improving infrastructure, the city has witnessed growing momentum in economic and trade cooperation with countries and regions involved in the initiative.

According to statistics of Zhanjiang Customs, the city's combined import and export values pertaining



Zhanjiang, a coastal city in Guangdong province, leverages its proximity to the ASEAN region to enhance trade and economic exchanges with the association's member countries and integrate itself into the development of the Belt and Road Initiative. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

to Belt and Road countries and regions increased from 18.58 billion yuan (\$2.55 billion) in 2013 to 32.03 billion yuan in 2022, with an average annual growth rate of 7.1 percent.

In the first eight months of this year, Zhanjiang generated foreign trade with BRI-involved countries

and regions valued at 21.87 billion yuan.

Of the total, exports were worth 7.69 billion yuan, up 9 percent year-on-year, and imports totaled 14.18 billion yuan.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative being proposed. Over the past decade, related foreign trade commodities of Zhanjiang have been gradually diversified, ranging from labor-intensive products, electromechanical products and aquatic products to steel, household appliances, and furniture and parts.

In the first eight months of this year, Zhanjiang exported 2.51 billion

yuan worth of steel to BRI-involved countries and regions, up 9.6 percent from a year ago; 880 million yuan worth of household appliances, up 6.4 percent; and 410 million yuan worth of furniture and parts, up 46.8 percent, customs statistics indicate.

From January to August, the city imported 2.77 billion yuan of agri-

**32.03**  
billion yuan

Value of trade with Belt and Road countries and regions in 2022

cultural products; 1.4 billion yuan of coal and lignite; 1.06 billion yuan of metal ore; and 1.01 billion yuan of potassium chloride.

The number of BRI-involved countries that have trade relations with the city has added up to 134 to date from 125 in 2013.

From this year on, Zhanjiang will explore broader cooperation with European countries, especially Germany; promote the establishment of friendly-city relationships with its counterparts in Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Kazakhstan and deepen cooperation with ASEAN, the European Union, Japan, South Korea and the South Pacific.

The city also plans to develop more shipping routes to ASEAN and other Belt and Road countries and regions, and is promoting the construction of an airport economic demonstration zone and Zhanjiang airport expressways.

The building of large export-oriented processing zones is another highlight of the city's development plan in the coming years. The project aims to develop new cooperation forms and high-quality cooperation platforms in trade and economy with the 10 member states of ASEAN, according to the city government.

## Seaport that's making all the right connections

By YUAN SHENGGAO

A new container shipping route, known as ICI7 Route, which connects Zhanjiang with Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India, was launched at Zhanjiang Port on Sept 14.

"The route not only provides regular nonstop container shipping services, but connects transit ports in Singapore and Malaysia, offering numerous advantages," said Jiang Shengzhong, marketing manager at Zhanjiang Port International Container Terminal. "With shortened shipping time, more space and lower comprehensive logistics costs, it is an optimal choice for businesses seeking efficient and cost-effective transportation solutions."

"The establishment of this route, along with direct routes to Southeast Asia and cold-chain routes to India, will greatly support the development of a foreign trade container shipping logistics channel in Zhanjiang."

The route will enhance connectivity between western Guangdong and Southeast Asian countries, expanding the regional logistics channel for the export of distinctive goods. It will also play a significant role in assisting the import of fruits from countries such as Thailand.

Zhanjiang Port, one of the regional hub ports on the Chinese mainland, boasts easy access to the main international shipping routes.

Over the last 10 years, Zhanjiang has actively participated in the Belt and Road Initiative. Making use of its location to connect various national strategic hubs, the port has continuously enhanced its position as a major distribution center for commodities in southern China, such as energy and raw materials. Equipped with world-class deep-water berths and a comprehensive transportation system, Zhanjiang Port is poised to become a strategic reserve and distribution center for bulk cargo, specializing in iron ore, petroleum, coal, grain and fertilizers.

"Using the advantages of the deep-water channel of Zhanjiang Port and the seamless connection between railway and sea transportation, we have connected the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. We're also expanding the service to Hainan Free Trade Port," said Jiang Chang, CEO assistant of Zhanjiang Port (Group).

So far, Zhanjiang Port has 36 productive berths, including 400,000-deadweight-tonne and 300,000-deadweight-tonne ones. It also has



The ICI7 container shipping route, linking Zhanjiang with Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India, opens at Zhanjiang Port on Sept 14.

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the first bonded logistics park in western Guangdong. It is a top-notch port in terms of navigation conditions and handling capacities in the southern coast of China. Its annual throughput capacity is 108 million metric tons.

Zhanjiang Port has been cracking the Southeast Asia market and is taking advantage of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to increase bulk cargo and container volumes in trade with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

In 2022, Zhanjiang Port recorded a container throughput of 30,800 twenty-foot equivalent units in its

trade with RCEP member countries, a year-on-year increase of 25.3 percent.

From January to August this year, the port reported an accumulated container throughput of 20,000 TEUs with RCEP member countries, a year-on-year increase of 4 percent.

Looking ahead, Zhanjiang will continue to construct a modern port-based logistic network and transport system to serve the BRI, local officials said. They added that the city will strive to become an international logistics center, shipping hub, bulk commodity trading center and regional bonded logistics distribution base.

## Exporting maritime expertise, prime goods

By HAO NAN

A batch of frozen tilapia slices weighing 24 metric tons, produced by Guangdong Longze Food located in the province's Zhanjiang city, was exported to Malaysia in late September.

Export of the fish slices is an example of Zhanjiang's efforts to ensure the rapid customs clearance of exported aquatic products and support the city's aquatic enterprises to explore international markets in countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative.

In the past few years, Zhanjiang Customs has worked to optimize registration process for export-oriented food production enterprises and to simplify administrative procedures, while setting up express channels for inspection and clearance for agricultural food products, helping local enterprises lower their costs and save time.

Data from Zhanjiang Customs showed that from January to August, the city exported 23,000 tons of aquatic products to Belt and Road countries and regions, with a combined value of 370 million yuan (\$50.78 million). From 2013-22, Zhanjiang exported a total of 412,800 tons of aquatic products to Belt and Road countries and regions, worth 10.37 billion yuan.

A maritime city, Zhanjiang boasts a huge breeding scale of aquatic products as well as advanced processing techniques, leading cold-chain logistics and a solid foundation for seedling cultivation.

Aiming to accelerate the high-quality development of its modern marine ranches and build a national demonstration city in the sector, Zhanjiang recently issued an action plan for the construction of modern marine ranches from 2023-35.

According to the plan, the city

**23,000**  
tons

Shipments of aquatic products to Belt and Road countries and regions during the first eight months of this year

will encourage local aquatic enterprises to go global; speed up the development of export-oriented fisheries; support local enterprises to build bigger and stronger international aquatic products trading platforms; and establish an international aquatic products trading center and an aquatic products distribution center in the Asia-Pacific region.

Furthermore, it will seize the opportunity brought by the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership free trade agreement to promote the construction of a China (Zhanjiang) cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zone.

Local aquatic enterprises will be supported in strengthening international and interprovincial cooperation to better utilize both domestic and overseas markets and resources.

Official statistics show Zhanjiang is home to 218 aquatic products processing enterprises. Of them, 20 realize an annual output value of more than 1 billion yuan each, while 112 have been licensed by such countries as the United States and those in the European Union and Southeast Asia for their export business.

In 2022, Zhanjiang's total output of aquatic products reached 1.26 million tons and the industrial output value hit 27.4 billion yuan. They have both ranked first in Guangdong for more than 20 years.

## Forging strong bonds with ASEAN member countries

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership came into force in 2022, Zhanjiang, a coastal city in Guangdong province, has expanded trade and industrial cooperation with RCEP members.

The RCEP is a free-trade agreement involving Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It is the world's largest free trade bloc covering about 30 percent of the world's population, as well as 30 percent of the world's economic and trade volume.

As the closest prefecture-level city in South China's Guangdong province to the region covered by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Zhanjiang enjoys a prime location for economic exchanges.

As Guangdong's only industrial park targeting ASEAN investments, the Fenyoung ASEAN Industrial Park provides a crucial platform for high-level opening-up and cooperation, local officials said.

In mid-June, a China-Malaysia technological innovation incubation center was inaugurated in the industrial park, creating an important venue for Zhanjiang to enhance exchanges with Malaysia and other ASEAN members.

"The incubation center provides services such as project docking and business visits for foreign-funded companies. Currently, it has drawn multiple Malaysian businesses to settle," said an official with the Fenyoung industrial park's administrative committee.

The official added that the incubation center will introduce cooperation with innovative companies from Malaysia and other ASEAN countries, promote bilateral investments in technology and agriculture, and provide platform-based services for foreign-funded enterprises.

The park will assist in project docking, talent exchange and business visits. It will provide trade, investment and financial support services to promote collaborations between the park as well as businesses in western Guangdong and

ASEAN members. The goal is to advance the construction of a modern industrial system, create an international cooperation platform and promote high-quality development in leaps and bounds, he noted.

The synergistic development park of China-Vietnam (Shenzhen-Haiphong) Economic and Trade Cooperation Park was opened in the city on Aug 1.

The synergistic development park will cash in on the industrial complementarity, and the solid foundation of the industrial chain and supply chain in the Pearl River Delta and Vietnam, as well as logistics advantages by virtue of Wushi Harbor nearby, so as to build a China-Vietnam double-circulation industrial cooperation zone and become a facilitator of trade and economic cooperation with ASEAN.

"We will focus on BASF's customized technology for engineering plastic foams and Baosteel Zhanjiang's high-quality steel to drive the development of supporting industries, establish a production capacity foundation and promote the industrial

layout of the new energy vehicle manufacturing sector," said the official at the Fenyoung industrial park.

The industrial park will ramp up industrial incubation; develop a high-quality modern industry system focused on new energy, new materials, equipment manufacturing, new-type energy storage and modern logistics as pillar sectors; and foster four major industrial clusters in new energy, new materials, equipment manufacturing and modern logistics, each capable of generating 10 billion yuan (\$1.37 billion) in annual output value, he said.

Government data show that the industrial park signed six investment projects in 2022. They involve a combined investment value of 6.5 billion yuan, up 160 percent year-on-year. Once operational, their annual output value is expected to reach 19.8 billion yuan.

As of June, some 50 businesses have settled in the park, with the pillar industries of new materials, iron and steel sector-support businesses, food and pharmaceuticals taking basic shape.



The annual China International Aquaculture Products Expo held in Zhanjiang helps local businesses go global.

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