



An aerial view of Kunshan, East China's Jiangsu province

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Kunshan in right place and time

By CANG WEI

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Adjacent to Shanghai in East China's Jiangsu province, Kunshan is one of the most economically developed cities in China, topping the Forbes China List of Best County-Level Cities for three years in a row. It is also one of the country's most attractive cities for tourists.

The city's GDP in the first six months of this year hit 125 billion yuan (\$19.6 billion), and imports and exports totaled \$39.9 billion, said Guan Aiguo, Party chief of Kunshan.

"Kunshan's GDP in 2011 reached 240 billion yuan, which surpassed those of several other provinces," said Guan.

Revenues in its service industry in 2011 reached 90 billion yuan, up 22.4 percent from 2010, and taxes paid by service companies saw an increase of 22.2 percent.

According to Guan, by the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), Kunshan plans to double its GDP to 400 billion yuan (US\$63.5 billion).

Since the start of the five-year plan, it has utilized foreign capital totaling more than \$19 billion and contributed 3 percent of China's total trade volume each year.

The city's unique geographic location contributes greatly to its rapid development.

"It just takes about 15 minutes to drive from Huaqiao, a township of Kunshan, to Shanghai's Hongqiao airport," said Yan An, deputy director of the



Guan Aiguo, Party chief of Kunshan. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

city's publicity department. "It's also along the Beijing-Shanghai high-speed railway, which is very convenient for tourists and businesspersons."

Strategies, advantages

Kunshan's new strategies and advantages in financial services have also helped to spur its continued rapid economic growth, which was about 14 percent higher than the previous year.

"The efficiency of the Kunshan government is well known throughout the country and among those who are familiar with China's investment environment," said Zhao Meng, assistant to the director of the city's Huaqiao International Service Business Park.

"All the members of the local government are devoted to providing good service to investors, even working during weekends and holidays," said Zhao.

Investing in Kunshan is easy and clear, with local government workers explaining the process and accompanying

investors through every step, if needed.

More companies have chosen to invest in Kunshan due to its various advantages, including the local government's service, said Zhao. At the 2011 Kunshan Modern Services Industry Investment Seminar, 31 projects worth a total of 9.5 billion yuan were signed.

Foreign direct investment surged 45.4 percent to 646 million yuan over the previous year.

The financial sector of the city last year saw a 25 percent increase in revenues, which hit 9.7 billion yuan, and 70 equity investment funds with about 30 billion yuan under management started operation.

In 2011, the city government took many initiatives to expand the range of financial outsourcing services and stimulate new forms of business process outsourcing (BPO), as financial services outsourcing has become more important to the city's development strategy.

Revenues from domestic outsourcing grew 60.8 percent and offshore outsourcing

reached \$129 million.

To attract more enterprises to set up headquarters in Kunshan, the local government also offered various policies, which have turned out to be fruitful.

More than 20 world-renowned enterprises have located their headquarters in Kunshan. Thirty companies last year came to the city. Total registered capital of companies headquartered in the city had reached 9.55 billion yuan by 2011.

The city has so far attracted more than 6,700 projects from 56 countries and regions, of which 83 have investments from Fortune 500 companies.

The Kunshan government has focused on a thriving service sector and effective industry restructuring as well as achieving a well-balanced industrial structure.

Emerging industries, such as electronic information, robots, industrial mold creation, biological research and renewable energy, are starting to develop rapidly in Kunshan.

"Take the mold production industry for example, more than 800 companies (in this industry) have operations in the city, and the sales of 34 of them have reached 50 million yuan," said Huang Jian, member of the standing committee of the city.

"In 2011 the sales of molds totaled 13.5 billion yuan, which accounted for one-ninth of the country's production (in this category)," Huang said.

"The city's capacity for innovation is vital for its

rapid growth and success in the future," Huang said. "The government invests 6 percent of the budget, about 1 billion yuan, into research and its application to promote technological innovation every year."

Kunshan has topped the list of the most innovative Chinese cities at the county level for five years in succession, according to China's Ministry of Science and Technology and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The city also puts great emphasis on education. It holds six universities and cooperates with many famous domestic and overseas universities, including Duke University, Carnegie Mellon University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Tsinghua University, Peking University, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Kunshan is also known for its livable environment, and attracts millions of foreign and domestic tourists every year.

Zhouzhuang, a beautiful water township nicknamed the Venice of the East, is one of the most renowned scenic spots in China and is known across the country for its delicate watery views. The exotic bridges and houses along the rivers impress every visitor.

Kunshan also has 26 forest and wetland parks and a 44 percent urban green coverage rate. It was recognized with the UN Habitat Scroll of Honor Award for its excellent environmental quality in 2010.

Li Zhuoxuan contributed to the story.



Qiangdeng, an ancient water town in Kunshan, Jiangsu province

Town has storied past, bright future

By SONG WENWEI

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Qiangdeng, an ancient water town under the jurisdiction of Kunshan in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, has a fresh look now that highlights its traditional culture, natural beauty and prosperous economy.

Formerly known as Qiangdun, the town has a recorded history of over 2,500 years that dates back to the states of Wu and Yue in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476BC).

In its long history, it has produced magnificent culture and many renowned literati.

It is the cradle of Kunqu, a local opera widely known and performed in China that is on the list of World Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is also the hometown of many ancient scholars, such as Gu Yanwu, an outstanding philosopher, writer and patriotic scholar in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Many people have been inspired by his famous quote, "A man, humble as he is, shares the burden of collective responsibility for the well-being of the world."

Today, it is making the best use of its culture and tradition and its favorable geographical location to build a "top town" characterized by continuous economic development, ecological harmony, social stability and a happy life for its residents.

To develop its economy, an industrial park of 35 square kilometers has been constructed in the northern part of the town with six industrial bases, including the automotive components and equipment manufacturing, semiconductor packaging and testing, LED optoelectronics and medical devices, special circuit boards and fine chemicals. Altogether 3,200 domestic and foreign-funded enterprises have invested in the park, of which 38 are foreign funded.

Statistics show that in 2011, the town's GDP reached \$10.8 billion and the major economic indices have maintained a double-digit growth rate for years.

It is planned that in the next five years, more efforts will be made to develop the emerging industries, with the hope of increasing the output value by 40 percent by 2015. More policy support will be directed to the development of financing, resources, semiconductor packaging and testing, automotive components and equipment, medical equipment, new mate-

rials, and modern logistics.

In addition to the industrial park, a modern business logistics center, a modern agricultural park and a new town have been constructed for the purpose of fully tapping the development potential of this ancient town.

With the aim of narrowing the differences between the urban and rural areas and creating a harmonious social environment, Qiangdeng, as one of the pilot areas for comprehensive reform of rural-urban integration in the province, has been striving to achieve breakthroughs in the development planning, living conditions, employment opportunities and income increase, social security and public services to fully accelerate the integration.

In recent years, Qiangdeng has turned a new leaf in terms of its infrastructure and social services. In the new town, supermarkets, banks and big stores are found everywhere in the thriving streets, bringing convenience to people's daily lives. There is also a well functioning public service system consisting of administrative services, healthcare, culture and sports facilities.

With its long history, profound culture and unique landscape, the city has seen its tourism industry grow rapidly in the past few years. Its abundant waterways, bridges and places of interests, including the old residences of celebrities and ancient winding stone-slab streets, all bear witness to its glorious history.

People have given very romantic and poetic descriptions of Qiangdeng. Some liken the town to a violin because it conveys the beauty of traditional Chinese opera. Others compare it to a book that captures the ideas and sentiments of the nation's forefathers but also serves as a repository of the culture and intelligence of its people.

In recent years, the development of modern agriculture has added momentum to Qiangdeng's overall social and economic development. It has adopted advanced agricultural concepts and made great efforts to cooperate with some famous colleges and research institutes to build the Datang Ecological Park and the Flower Expo Park.

Qiangdeng is moving forward with the times while keeping its traditional roots, thereby merging tradition with modernity.

Li Zhuoxuan contributed to the story.

Industrial parks driving development

By CANG WEI

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Kunshan has established a series of industrial parks to attract more foreign and domestic investors and to maintain the city's sustainable development. Now the city has constructed more than six key industrial parks.

"The services available to investors in Kunshan are the best they can acquire in China," said Guan Aiguo, Party chief of Kunshan. "We clearly know that favorable financial services for investors will continue to be a key driving force for the city's growth."

The Huaqiao International

Service Business Park is a provincial development zone specifically for developing the local modern service industry. It is also a national demonstration zone for business process outsourcing and a center for high-tech services.

The Huaqiao International Service Business Park attracted 20 famous outsourcing enterprises in 2011 and is playing an increasingly important role in the city's economy.

The park has a very favorable geographical location. Only one hour's drive from Shanghai, it is an important terminal along the Shanghai-Nanjing expressway. It is 20 kilometers from Shanghai's Hongqiao

Transport Hub and 80 kilometers from the Pudong International Airport. The distance from the park to Taicang Port, one of the first four ports in the country with direct shipping to Taiwan, is only 35 kilometers.

Facilities in the business park include shopping malls, five-star hotels, and sports and entertainment facilities. A Hilton hotel, a state-of-the-art training center and a theater are already operational. An international school, a convention center, a hospital with the world's most advanced facilities and an entertainment center are also currently being built there.

Known as "little Taipei", Kunshan is home to many Taiwan-invested businesses. With preferential policies put forward by the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, the Cross-Strait (Kunshan) Trade Cooperation Zone was planned as part of the Huaqiao International Service Business Park.

The city now has more than 3,800 Taiwan-invested projects, which have a total registered capital of \$21 billion. The total overseas investment is \$45 billion.

The Huaqiao International Service Business Park, focusing on service outsourcing, logistics and trade business, provides a solid foundation

for the success of Cross-Strait (Kunshan) Trade Cooperation Zone.

The trade cooperation zone, covering an area of 4.4 square kilometers, aims to develop into a premier platform for commodities from Taiwan to the mainland with the following five centers: a Taiwan commodity trade center for the retail and wholesale of Taiwan's commodities; a commodity exhibition center; a distribution center and a customs bonded logistics center providing bonded storage services and a comprehensive service center.

The zone attempts to become a pilot project where preferential policies are provided to boost economic ties between the mainland and Taiwan.

The Kunshan Industrial Technology Research Institute is an independent legal entity established by the local government. In 2010, it was recognized as the only one of the comprehensive industrial technology research institute in Jiangsu province.

It aims to lead the cluster of emerging industries, and serve innovation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The siRNA Biotechnology Research Institute, the New Panel Display Technology Center, the Intelligent Robot

Engineering Research Center and Sense Technology and Research Institute have settled in the Kunshan Industrial Technology Research Institute.

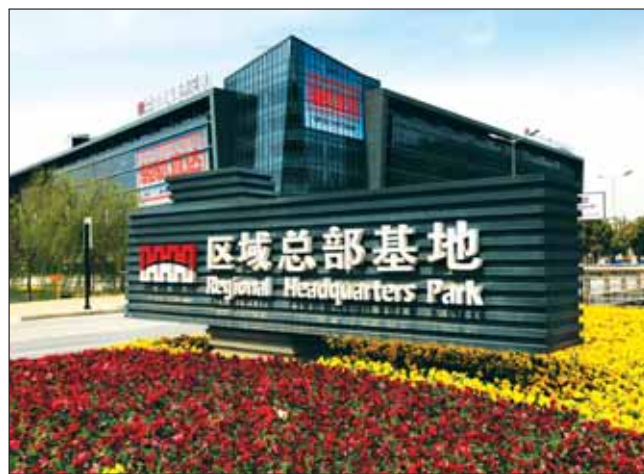
Eighty professionals with doctoral degrees and 160 post-graduates have come to work for the institute.

Another park, the Kunshan Tourism and Holiday Zone, brings in most of the city's tourism revenue.

In addition to Zhouzhuang and Qiangdeng, two ancient towns famous for their picturesque landscapes and unique culture, the Kunqu opera also appeals greatly to Chinese and foreign tourists. With about 17 million tourists from home and abroad in 2011, the zone generated 18 billion yuan in revenue.

The Kunshan Comprehensive Free Trade Zone, a home to logistics and manufacturing companies, attracted 31 new companies in 2011. It offered bonded logistics services for 440 billion yuan worth of cargo last year, and its revenues reached 640 million yuan.

The Kunshan Software Park is home to a variety of companies, which are involved in e-commerce, design, gaming, animation and audio-video services. The resident companies generated 780 million yuan in sales revenue.



The Huaqiao International Service Business Park is home to many regional headquarters of international and domestic companies.