

## PRD region blueprint unveiled

The Pearl River Delta (PRD) region, including Hong Kong and Macao, will be built into "a globally competitive" and "vigorous area in Asia Pacific" by 2020, says a National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) plan released yesterday.

The PRD region includes cities such as Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Jiangmen, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Huizhou and Zhaoqing in the southern part of Guangdong province.

The NDRC has mapped out plans for cooperation with Hong Kong and Macao, as well as comprehensive development of the PRD region, including technology innovation, environmental protection and social welfare.

Work on a bridge linking Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai will begin later this year, for which the central government will provide 5 billion yuan (\$730 million), NDRC deputy director Du Ying told a press conference while releasing the plan.

The plan is expected to achieve economic integration in the PRD region by 2020 - including establishing an intercity mass transit system, a distribution network for natural gas and refined oil, building a public information database and unifying energy prices.

The plan outlines the positioning of the PRD region as a "leading economic powerhouse" in the country. It promises more autonomy to the region, too, through economic restructuring, coordinated urban and rural development and social reforms.

"The combined economic output of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao makes it the largest economy in Asia after Japan, the Republic of Korea and India," Du said.

The NDRC plan will intensify cooperation among Hong Kong, Macao and mainland cities in the PRD region, focusing on infrastructure construction, industrial development, technological innovation and improving living standards, he said.

The mainland cities in the region will benefit further from increasing economic interactions with Hong Kong and Macao, and by participating in the developing of China-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Free Trade Area, according to the plan.

The region will continue to serve as "an experimental field" of the country's 30-year reforms, Du said.

Guangdong province is the powerhouse of China's economy, with an annual GDP growth of 13.45 percent - 3.5 percentage points higher than the national average - over the past three decades.

Other objectives outlined in the NDRC plan include:

Raising per capita GDP in the PRD region from the current \$7,000 to \$20,000 in 2020.

Urbanizing 80 percent of the PRD region by 2012.

Raising the region's average life expectancy to 78 years by 2012.

Ensuring pension insurance cover for more than 95 per cent of urban workers, over 80 per cent migrant workers and more than 60 per cent rural residents.

*Source: Xinhua - China Daily*

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