

Procedures unveiled for birth of Xiongan New Area



Chinese President Xi Jinping(C) inspects the Xiongan New Area scheme in Anxin County of Baoding City, north China's Hebei Province, Feb 23, 2017. Xiongan New Area, an economic zone about 100 kilometers south of Beijing, will span Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin counties in Hebei Province, covering 2,000 square kilometers in the long term with a population of 2 to 2.5 million. (Xinhua/Lan Hongguang)

Plans for Xiongan New Area, an economic zone about 100 kilometers south of Beijing, are becoming more clear.

The zone will span Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin counties in Hebei Province, covering 2,000 square kilometers in the long term with a population of 2 to 2.5 million.

The surprise announcement to set up the new area on April 1 actually represented the results of years of research and rumination by the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and is a major strategic decision which will open a new era of development in the region.

MILLENNIUM PLAN

Drawing an analogy to legendary Chinese flood control hero Dayu, who contained flooding by means of dredging rather than obstruction, President Xi Jinping said, "The capital's core functions should be preserved and

strengthened, and some inappropriate functions adjusted and weakened.”

“Some functions should be transferred to Hebei and Tianjin,” said Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

Addressing a central economic meeting at the end of 2014, Xi said that transferring Beijing’s non-capital functions, lowering its population density and promoting economic and social development commensurate with its population and resources must be at the core of coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

During CPC meetings in April 2015, Xi suggested investigating the possibility of a new city in Hebei, built according to new development concepts.

On March 24, 2016, Xi heard a report on the creation of Beijing’s “subsidiary center” and another area where non-capital functions would be shifted from Beijing. The subsidiary center is to be located in the eastern suburb of Tongzhou while the other area will be Xiongan.

Xi stressed that Beijing is at an historic juncture. Tongzhou and Xiongan will form two “wings” for Beijing and create new growth engines for Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei.

On May 27, 2016, Xiongan New Area appeared for the first time in a report reviewed at a Political Bureau meeting of the CPC Central Committee.

Calling it a “major historic and strategic decision” that would be “crucial for the millennium to come,” Xi said the subsidiary center of Beijing and Xiongan New Area should withstand the test of history, and be the legacy of this generation of CPC members.

People will see that Xiongan New Area, Pudong New Area in Shanghai and Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in Guangdong form a ladder from north to south across the map of China to act as the testbeds for the country’s reform and opening up.

These areas are expected to work together to balance the development of China and change the country’s make-up which features a strong economy in the south and weaker economic development in the north.

A NEW WING FOR BEIJING

It took some time to choose the location for an ideal new city.

Under Xi’s direct guidance, the process began in February 2015, with the final proposal deliberated and agreed by the Standing Committee of the CPC Central Committee’s Political Bureau on March 24, 2016.

Xiongan sits at the center of a triangular area with Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei’s capital Shijiazhuang at the apexes.

With good road and rail access, Xiongan commuters will be able reach any of the three cities in about 30 minutes, The site is only 55 km from Beijing’s

new airport.

The area also has a pleasant environment with a relatively low degree of urbanization. Less than 100,000 people currently live in the core area, about the same of a regular residential community in Beijing.

Visiting the location on Feb. 23 this year, Xi expressed satisfaction with the location, population and natural resources of Xiongan.

"It's a good choice, as it will not create too much trouble for locals, involves only a small amount of relocation and something can be achieved in a short time," said Xi.

According to the president's plans, Xiongan New Area will primarily be the receiver of non-capital functions from Beijing, including some administrative and public institutions, company headquarters, financial institutions, higher education institutions and sci-tech units.

A NEW CITY MODEL

During his February visit, Xi called for "world vision, international standards, Chinese characteristics and high goals" in planning and construction.

If all goes according to plan, the area will have an excellent environment, optimal urban layout, great public services and innovative development.

As Xi has stressed on many occasions that eco-protection should be the priority in construction. Xiongan New Area is home to Baiyangdian, one of the largest freshwater wetlands in north China.

Urban design is another keyword. "Every inch of land should be clearly planned before any construction begins," Xi said many times during meetings.

World renowned planners and architects from home and abroad will design Xiongan, with the area to become an exemplar of future city construction.

With a free hand to improve public services, provide better public resources and advance reforms in fields including household registration, investment, trade and city management, Xiongan will attract the very best talent.

In preparation, purchases and projects related to land and property and changes to household registration have been blocked in the three counties since June last year. Local authorities are on high alert against illegal land and housing purchases or construction to guard against speculation.

According to the plans, a major transportation network and basic infrastructure should be in place in Xiongan by 2020. The area will be well connected to Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei by 2022 when the Winter Olympic Games are held.

Urdu version of Xi's book on governance launched in Pakistan



Jiang Jianguo (2nd, R), Vice Head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, donates the Urdu version of Chinese President Xi Jinping's book "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" to Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (2nd, L) at the release ceremony at the Prime Minister Secretariat in Islamabad, capital of Pakistan on April 14, 2017. (Xinhua/Liu Tian)

The Urdu language edition of the book "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China" was launched here on Friday and the launching ceremony was attended by around 300 Pakistani and Chinese officials, academicians and researchers.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Jiang Jianguo, vice head of the Publicity Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, participated in the ceremony.

In his speech, Sharif said the rich content of the book is both "enlightening and inspiring" and Chinese President Xi Jinping shares his experiences and thoughts with wisdom, empathy and kindness.

"What has touched me most is that this book is not just about high politics, but also about moving stories of common people, their lives and inspirations about hard work and family values. In our times, the peaceful development of

China has stimulated peaceful rise of the entire world,” said Sharif.

He added that “this book is as much about our contemporary world as it is about China. This book is as much about Chinese dream as it is about the global dream to have peaceful, harmonious and connected world.”

For his part, Jiang said in his speech that to create a community of shared future of mankind is an important idea in the book since it aims to build a world with lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness and inclusiveness as well as cleanliness and beauty, adding that this idea points out the direction of the development of the human society and a new method for international problems.

Jiang said Pakistan is China’s good friend, good neighbor, good brother and the prioritized partner of the Belt and Road Initiative, adding that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project of the initiative and has created more than 10,000 jobs for the locals in Pakistan.

“We fully believe that after our joint cooperation and coordination, a more prosperous and better Pakistan will be presented in front of the world,” said Jiang.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong said the English version of Xi’s book launched here in 2014 was warmly welcomed in the Pakistani society and the Urdu version will facilitate more Pakistani readers to understand Xi’s philosophy of governance, adding that the completion of the Urdu version becomes a new symbol of friendly cooperation between China and Pakistan in the new era.

Mushahid Hussain, chairman of Parliamentary Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, said Pakistan is grateful to China and Chinese President Xi for reposing faith and confidence in Pakistan and its people through the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

“Because the CPEC today is a factor for national unity and progress and prosperity of the people of Pakistan, the provinces of Pakistan, particularly the less developed regions of Pakistan in the quest to build a better and more prosperous future,” he added.

The book “Xi Jinping: The Governance of China” contains 79 speeches, talks, interviews, notes and letters of the Chinese leader between November 2012 and June 2014. To date, it has been translated into 16 languages and has a distribution of over 6.2 million copies around the world.

The book helps readers around the world better understand China’s development, domestic and foreign policies, and response to the concerns of the international community.

Akram Zaki, former Pakistan ambassador to China, told Xinhua that the Urdu version of the book will help more Pakistanis understand the new level of partnership of the two countries through the CPEC.

“Most of Pakistanis don’t know English and if they want to know what glorious

things Chinese leadership is doing, this book will provide to the people who are fond of reading. They all talk about CPEC and China-Pakistan friendship, now they will know the significance of China-Pakistan friendship,” he said.

Farrukh Sohail Goindi, chief of the Jamhoori Publications in charge of the Urdu version’s translation, said it is an honor and pleasure for him to translate a Chinese president’s book in Urdu. “Through this book, we can understand the Chinese politics, the vision of Chinese president and the role of China-Pakistan friendship in the region and all over the world.”

Goindi, who reads the book five to nine times in different periods in different stages, told Xinhua after the ceremony that Urdu is an opinion-making language in Pakistan and through Urdu publication, a commoner can easily understand the role of China, the leadership of China, and the economic and political roles of China.

Xiongan’s key role is to receive Beijing’s non-capital functions: vice premier

The Xiongan New Area’s most important role is as a new home for Beijing’s “non-capital” functions, according to Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli.

The creation of Xiongan New Area is a major historic and strategic decision that will be crucial for the millennium to come, and President Xi Jinping has been directly engaged in the planning process, Zhang told Xinhua.

The Xiongan New Area will be a green, livable and modern urban area, a region led by innovation-driven development, a demonstration area of balanced development, and a pioneering region of open development, Zhang said.

Quoting Xi, the vice premier said development of the new economic zone should protect the local environment, avoid becoming an industrial hub led by traditional industries and the real estate sector, lift growth of neighboring areas and seek higher levels of opening up, such as participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.

Development of the Xiongan New Area will explore new ways of addressing the problems of big cities, promote innovation and new growth engines, optimize the urban pattern and bridge the gaps in economic growth and public services in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, Zhang added.

The decision to set up the Xiongan New Area was made in a “scrupulous, prudent, methodical and democratic” manner, with senior officials of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region development team meeting many times to discuss

such issues as the restoration and protection of the region's vast freshwater wetland Baiyangdian, Zhang said.

Zhang outlined key tasks to ensure steady and orderly progress.

The government will use the most advanced planning philosophy and international standards to create a green, smart area.

Development of Xiongan will move on gradually and methodically with no large-scale real estate development or illegal construction.

The government will strive to balance developing infrastructure and receiving Beijing's non-capital functions.

A clean slate will allow the government to set up a lean, efficient and uniform management body and use market-oriented measures to finance the work, the vice premier said.

The plan for the Xiongan New Area was officially announced on April 1. The new economic zone will span Xiongxian, Rongcheng and Anxin counties in Hebei Province, eventually covering 2,000 square kilometers, with a population of 2 to 2.5 million.

Addressing a central economic meeting at the end of 2014, Xi said that transferring Beijing's non-capital functions, lowering its population density and promoting economic and social development commensurate with its population and resources must be at the core of coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

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Natural disasters kill 32 in China in 1st quarter

Natural disasters caused the deaths of 32 people in China in the first quarter of 2017, and another 39 were hospitalized, government statistics showed.

Natural disasters also affected the lives of nearly 1.96 million people, with 16,000 displaced, according to figures released Friday by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the National Commission for Disaster Reduction.

In addition, over 1,300 houses collapsed and about 4,000 hectares of crops were destroyed.

Authorities estimated economic losses of 1.87 billion yuan (270 million U.S. dollars), but the situation in the first quarter was less serious compared with the same period in the past eight years. Endi

China SOE watchdog sets up Xiongan working group

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, China's top state-owned enterprises (SOEs) regulator, has announced to establish a special working group to support the construction of Xiongan New Area.

China's centrally administered SOEs are encouraged to make the most of their strengths to map out future development strategies for the area, the SASAC said in a statement released Friday after a meeting gathering its leaders earlier this week.

The economic zone, about 100 kilometers south of Beijing, will cover 2,000 square kilometers in the long term with a population of 2 to 2.5 million.

"The centrally administered SOEs are encouraged to lend strong support to construction of the zone in areas like energy security, infrastructure, electricity, telecommunications, rail transport, ecological protection, information-based network and smart city," noted the statement.

Great support will be given to these central SOEs in locating their newly-registered high-tech, new technology and high-end service businesses into

Xiongan New Area, and better coordination between the central SOEs and local authorities will be promoted, it added.

China currently has 102 central SOEs. The plan to set up the new area is a major strategic decision which will open a new era of development.