



Li Zhanshu (right), Party chief of Guizhou province, presents a plaque to Shao Qiwei, head of the National Tourism Administration, to show thanks to the government's concern and support for the provincial tourism industry.

PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

Municipal Party chief: We are moving forward at 'Bijie speed'

By ZHAO KAI

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Life has improved markedly for citizens of Bijie thanks to its rapid development, said Qin Rupei, Party chief of the city, which is located in Guizhou province.

"We are trying to make everything better as soon as we can," Qin said.

The city's development has quickened its pace in recent years, and Qin terms this phenomenon "Bijie speed".

The city is known for its role as the country's automobile assembly base, and the economy here is expected to be further boosted by preferential policies that the State Council introduced this year.

City leaders are making a push to further accelerate economic growth.

To carry out this strategy, all enterprises and departments in the city are doubling their efforts.

During the 2012 Spring Festival holiday, some 63 coal mining companies in Bijie's Qixingguan district kept working instead of taking a break.

One local cement company broke a new sales record when it moved 4,000 tons over the Spring Festival vacation, and Qin praised the company as "the city's industry model".

According to the company's general manager, who declined to be named, their long-term goal is to achieve 1.2 million tons in annual sales this year.

The preferential policies issued this year by the central government were not limited to the city and were designed to encourage the growth of Guizhou province as a whole. However, Qin said that the fact Bijie was mentioned 29 times in the policy indicates it has a special role to play.

By the end of March, Bijie's yearly tax and fee income so far had reached 5.57 billion yuan (\$836 million), a year-on-year growth of 49 percent, according to official data.

Meanwhile, the city is also determined to break constraints in the development of transportation.

After a series of construction projects, including railways, highways and an airport, a more modern and developed transportation network will be established, making Bijie a regional hub connecting Guizhou to nearby provinces and regions, such as Yunnan and Chongqing.

In recent years, Bijie has undergone successful upgrades to its industrial structure. It has grown from a simple base of coal mining into a center for coal chemical processing, a more advanced industry.

It has also encouraged development in the equipment manufacturing and wind power industries.

The investment environment has dramatically changed since every county of Bijie began building industrial zones. "It will be a great attraction to outside investors," a local official said.

In addition, a thriving tourism industry also plays a big role in the city's development. Scenic spots, such as the Baili Azalea in Qianxi county, has attracted hundred of thousands of visitors for its stunning view.

According to the data provided by local government, tourism created a large number of job opportunities for local residents, who can find work as tour guides or provide services at feature spots.

"Our goal is to achieve 18 percent GDP growth, around 200 billion yuan, by the end of year 2016," said Qin.

"It's not an easily accomplished task, but along with city's spirit and our 'Bijie speed', I'm full of confidence!"

Province pins hopes on tourism

By CUI JIA

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Tourism plays a key role in Guizhou's mission to end poverty in the southwestern province, an official said on Monday.

"More than 420,000 local villagers climbed out of poverty from 2006 to 2010 by getting involved in tourism, and more people living under the poverty line will benefit from it in the future," said Zhao Kezhi, governor of Guizhou, during the opening ceremony of the seventh Guizhou Tourism Industry Development Conference in Bijie prefecture.

More than 56 million tourists came to villages around Guizhou in 2011 to experience the rich and colorful cultures of different ethnic groups, including the Miao, Dong, Yi, Tujia and Buyi.

Last year, more than 1 million people found employment in tourism related areas.

"Most of Guizhou's tourism resources are in remote and impoverished mountainous areas inhabited by ethnic groups. Developing tourism in such areas could effectively increase local incomes," Zhao said.

Guizhou is one of China's most impoverished regions. The province's average annual economic growth in the 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) period was lower than the national average, so Guizhou needs to reach and maintain an even higher growth rate during the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) period.

The State Council issued new policies in January to further promote economic and social development of Guizhou.

The policies include measures that are expected to help this poverty-stricken province catch up with advanced provinces and regions by protecting its ecological advantages, strengthening industrialization and urbanization, and accelerating economic development.

According to the document, the tourism industry will be developed into the pillar industry of Guizhou.

The province's income from tourism has increased to 106 trillion yuan (\$16.8 trillion), more than four times the income in 2005.

Guizhou has great potential for tourism development because of its natural beauty and diverse ethnic cultures, Zhao said.



Diplomatic envoys to China attend the seventh Guizhou Tourism Industry Development Conference in Bijie on April 23.

One obstacle standing in the way of the tourism industry is the mountainous region's poor transportation infrastructure.

The Guizhou government will speed up the construction of highways around the province. Provincial officials are also

making it a priority to open new local airports, including Xinzhou, Huangping and Maotai.

The conference was held in the prefecture's famous azalea scenic spot, where wild azaleas in pink, red and white cover more than 120 kilometers of mountains at

this time of the year.

From a distance, those mountains just look like giant bouquets that stretch as far as the eye can see, which is why Bijie's azalea scenic is nicknamed the "colorful belt of the earth" by locals.

Guizhou cashes in on wealth of beauty

By CRAIG MCINTOSH

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For a long time, the splendid scenery of Guizhou province has been to its inhabitants a bane rather than a boon.

Despite the province's steady rainfall and relatively mild climate year round,

the rolling karst mountains that cover most of this area offer little arable land for farmers to grow crops.

Yet, these mountains and valleys, which have for so long stood in the way of villagers' dreams, could now be their making.

Communities are already being transformed in this province thanks to efforts to make tourism a pillar industry.

In the county seat of Qianxi, where a gala to mark the seventh Guizhou Tourism Industry Development Conference was staged on Sunday evening, a fellow guest from Guizhou Television told me that few of the glitzy buildings that I could see around me, including plush apartment blocks and a four-star hotel, had been standing this time last year.

Development here is occurring at a blistering pace. However, it could be said that nature has given the province a head start.

Guizhou may be classed among the poorest provinces in China, but it is undoubtedly blessed with a wealth of scenic beauty that, if harnessed in a sustainable way, could prove a gold mine for residents and the local economy for decades to come.

The terrain still poses a major challenge for transportation companies because road travel remains the only option in many counties and prefectures.

However, these journeys are a spectacle in and of themselves. Most take visitors along winding, mountainside roads and run through beautiful valleys and ancient villages.

The destinations can be even more breathtaking.

As I write, I sit in a newly developed

tourist spot in northwestern Bijie, where I am surrounded by a forest of wild azaleas. The flowers are worthless to the villagers, I'm told, largely because the trees on which they grow are too damp to be used as firewood.

Yet, the forest that lines the hills around this spot makes for a dazzling explosion of pink, red and white in every direction. In fact, color is very much a theme that runs through this province, which is marketed to potential visitors in Chinese as having "the colorful life".

This is, in no small part, thanks to the large number of ethnic groups who live here.

Traditional folk performances by the Miao, Yi and Hui groups have been the highlights of both the evening gala and the tourism conference: men in gold shorts and tunics twirling ropes of fire; women dressed in pink and black singing, while others blow monotone on handmade horn instruments; and young girls skipping happily dressed in white tunics with large black bundles on their heads.

These unique customs and rituals, which have survived for centuries, contribute to a rich cultural tapestry in Guizhou that, together with its natural scenery, could potentially lead this generation and future generations out of poverty.



The girls of the Yi ethnic group perform a dance to welcome guests.

IF YOU GO

Zhijin Cave and Dinosaur Valley

Take the highway from the city of Anshun, or set out from the city of Guiyang along No 321 National Road to Baxiandong Dock or take a boat from Huawu Miao village.

Baili Azalea scenic spot

Take Guiyang-Bijie express way. Exit at Jinpo town or Pudi town of Qianxi county.

Shexiang Tomb

Take Guiyang-Bijie expressway directly to Dafang county.

Jiudongtian scenic spot

Take Guiyang-Bijie express way to Maochang town of Dafang county.

Caohai Lake, Baicaoping and Jiucaiping scenic spots

There are two routes to get into Hezhang county or Weining county, where those spots are located. You can either take Guiyang-Bijie expressway to the city of Bijie or Shuicheng-Huangguoshu highway to the city of Liupanshui.