

Culture: new pathway to creative industrial prosperity

By ZHANG ZHAO

Jilin province's culture industry may be an emerging sector, it still promotes the economy, and, in fact, the province has become something of a national superstar in cultural development, its Party chief has said.

And it is proud of these economic achievements, which are improving people's lives, Sun Zhengcai, the Party head added.

The province set up a special 10-million-yuan (\$1.5 million) fund, in 2007, to develop the culture industry.

That was increased to 30 million yuan last year, and is expected to grow in the coming years.

Similar funds or subsidies were set up in many of the province's cities like Changchun, the capital, and Tonghua to support key enterprises and projects.

The government has tried to integrate the culture business into a larger emerg-



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SUN ZHENGCAI
PARTY CHIEF OF JILIN PROVINCE

ing-industry development plan. It is focusing on 10 cultural areas like animation and video games, art, mass media, entertainment, and show business.

It plans to develop up to five large culture enterprises with national influence, and as many as 20 industrial clusters with financial services to back that industry.

"We're well aware of the strategic importance of



Wang Rulin (center), governor of Jilin, and Gao Guangbin (left), Changchun Party head, join other government leaders in touching a crystal ball to mark the opening of the Jilin Northeast Asia Cultural Creative Technology Zone, in November 2010.

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the culture industry in our economic restructuring. It's a new way to boost the province's economy," Sun explained.

There are already several specialized industrial zones in Changchun for the publishing, animation, and music industries.

And, the governments of other cities like Tonghua, Songyuan, Siping and Baishan are taking a close look at this and mapping out their own cultural development strategies.

Plenty of resources

As the government integrates culture, technology, and tourism, Jilin is becoming a national leader. The government is encouraging

culture businesses to establish partnerships with similar companies elsewhere.

The Jilin Publishing Group, for example, is a pilot in this trans-regional cooperation for China's publishing industry, having set up a joint venture with a Beijing publisher.

Two Jilin culture companies — the Yuping Handcraft Products Co Ltd and Vixo Animation, Comics & Games Technology Co Ltd — were listed as national demonstration bases for the culture industry last year.

The government drew up plans for a Changchun culture industrial park, which opened in November 2010 and attracted companies from Russia, Japan and

South Korea.

The companies mainly focus on animation, video games, creative design, software outsourcing and education and they share the park's financial services, human resources management, and intellectual property deals. They also benefit from the park's information, technical support, and employee training programs.

Changbai Mountain, an old volcano that straddles the Jilin-North Korea border, plays an important cultural role in the province. The local government sees the mountain as a vital tourism and leisure industry source.

It is making a great effort to mine the local history and customs for tourist purposes

and is looking at developing local cuisine and other specialty products, such as ginseng.

Its grasslands and wetlands can also become tourist attractions, in places like Chagan Lake, the Xianghai Nature Reserve, and Momoge Nature Reserve.

"The industrial park is an innovative demonstration model," commented Xun Fengqi, head of the provincial publicity department.

"Cities all across Jilin should copy Changchun's experience and establish similar culture industry bases, and build theme parks and streets. In that way, we can find new pathways to creative industrial development."

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Crafts for the global market

By LIU MINGTAI

The value of Jilin's culture industry has grown more than 17 percent annually, since 2006.

By 2008, nearly 5 percent of its GDP was from that industry, and that figure is expected to reach more than 6 percent under the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015), according to provincial officials.

The province had a number of culture-related events last year. One of these was the Northeast Asia Culture and Art week, in September, a part of the Northeast Asia Expo. A total of 1.62 billion yuan worth of culture-related contracts were signed during the expo.

The province is encouraging local folk handicrafts people to "get into the global market" and many local products have cultivated a reputation, such as the Songhua inkstones and Yuping puppets.

It is also encouraging local companies to get listed if possible. According to a Changchun government document, "Small-and mid-sized technology companies can get on the growth enterprise board," not just the big, major corporations.

"Listed companies will play a crucial role in improving the industrial structure and scale, and cultural prosperity," said Sun Zhengcai, Jilin's Party chief.

"So, the government should do everything possible to help companies get listed and improve the financial services."



Animation, comics and games building in the creative industry park.