

A new jewel rising from Tangshan Bay area

► New port to boast "most eco-friendly community ever built"

By RAYMOND ZHOU

One turn outside Wang Zhongmin's office stands a lighthouse.

Located right in the middle of the street, traffic skirts it as if it were one of those "garden islands" once ubiquitous in Chinese cities.

The lighthouse is a remnant from the old days when Caofeidian was as big as a basketball court when the tide was in — and the size of a football field when out.

Today the island of Caofeidian is at the heart of a process that can both literally and figuratively be described as "nation-building".

As much as 310 sq km of land will be reclaimed by 2020 after the provincial government of Hebei officially approved the administrative establishment of Caofeidian new district yesterday.

It exercises control over Caofeidian industrial zone, Tanghai county and Nanbao development zone with a total area of 1,862 sq km.

The reshaping of the landmass has been made possible by Mother Nature herself:

outside its large shoals lay chasms as deep as 30 m, ideal for building a port that docks 300,000-ton ships.

Wang Zhongmin manages this fledgling port, or the first phase of it.

As executive vice president of Tangshan Caofeidian Industrial and Commercial Port Co, his office has a full wall of windows overlooking the harbor.

When asked about competition with nearby ports, such as those in Tianjin and Qinhuangdao, he laughed: "The port business all over the country is experiencing breakneck growth. Demand far exceeds supply. Even with the fast expansion of facilities, ships still sometimes have to wait for docking. Do you know how much it costs a cape ship — the largest kind — to wait a day? \$180,000 for rental.

"So, the building of ports must be reasonably ahead of market needs."

Tangshan Bay

Caofeidian is about 80 km from downtown Tangshan, an industrial city devastated by an earthquake in 1976.

If the city itself is like a



The new Shougang Jingtang Iron and Steel Corp in Tangshan, Hebei province.

File photo

phoenix reborn, the coastal area of the municipality is like a new wing that will take the city to unprecedented heights.

Tangshan has a coastline of 198 km, and Caofeidian is the diamond that glitters the brightest.

Heavy machinery is currently sucking up sand from the bottom of the sea, spewing it out to make new land.

On the east side of Caofeidian New Area, a 10 sq km town accommodating 300,000 people is breaking ground.

"It will be the most eco-friendly community ever built," said Zhao Yong, CPC secretary of Tangshan.

Eventually, the town will have 150 sq km with a population of more than a million.

Farther to the east is another "New Area" called Laoting, and to the west is Fengnan Industrial New Area followed by Luhan Economic and Technological Development Zone.

Zhao Yong pointed along the strategy of "Four Points Along One Corridor", mapping out the future of not just Tangshan

but one of North China's most dynamic engines.

The "corridor" covers 2,143 sq km, with a length of 150 km and varying in width from two to 80 km.

It hugs Tangshan Bay, which is part of the much larger Bohai Gulf.

Zhao's dream is to build it into the equivalent of Tokyo Bay.

"The economy around Tokyo Bay is one third of Japan's total, anchoring on two big cities, including the capital city — Tokyo and Yokohama; Tangshan Bay has Beijing and Tianjin, one of which is also a capital city. Tokyo Bay has five major industries — iron and steel, chemicals, equipment manufacturing, logistics and high tech, and we have been approved for almost identical industries. One thing Tokyo Bay does not have — but we do — is the offshore oil field," explained Zhao.

Pioneers

Driving along the highway leading to the southernmost tip of Caofeidian, one sees

a vast vista of flattened sandbank-filled land with occasional billboards and sand-blowing machines on

We put in overtime to master the skills of operating new equipment. The image of a steel worker using a shovel to toss coal into the furnace has been replaced with one operating a computer.

XU JIANHUA
An executive with Shougang

the horizon.

A cluster of buildings on the west side of the highway attracts attention for its magnificence.

It is the new home of Shougang, one of the nation's biggest iron and steel plants.

The relocation of Shougang from the western suburb of Beijing to Caofeidian made headlines.

Though presumably to be a move to clean up the capital city's air, it will help spark economic liftoff in the coastal area of Tangshan.

But does that mean pollution will also be shifted to this less populated island?

"When we talk about Shougang's move, we're talking in figurative terms. The capacity will be relocated, but not a single piece of equipment has actually been transported from Beijing to Caofeidian. Everything here is new and complies with much stricter environmental protection laws," explains Zhao Yong.

The new venture, an equity partnership between Shougang and Tangshan Steel, will make use of every new technology available to minimize the impact on the environment: The waste residues will be turned into cement, waste gas used to generate electricity and waste water recycled.

For people who work here,

the life of a pioneer is not much fun.

"We are 40 km from the nearest town, and we have little recreation here," said Xu Jianhua, an executive with the new Shougang.

Xu is among the few thousand who shuttle from Beijing and downtown Tangshan every week.

Every weekend a fleet of 40 buses make their way towards the big cities.

"We put in overtime to master the skills of operating new equipment. The image of a steel worker using a shovel to toss coal into the furnace has been replaced with one operating a computer," said Xu.

The first phase of Shougang's Caofeidian facility will start production on Oct 18.

A blast furnace was spitting big fireballs the day we visited.

"It is in testing," explained Xu. "When it goes into regular mode, you won't see the fire, and in production we'll rank as No 1 in the whole country and among the top five in the world."



Workers at a construction site in Caofeidian, Tangshan, Hebei province.

Jiang Dong

Sun's prophetic vision realized in Tokyo-style shipping hub

By RAYMOND ZHOU

"I don't know where Dr. Sun Yat-sen got the information, but obviously he knew that off the coast of Caofeidian island and shoal there are deep underwater trenches fit for a port — the deepest being 36 m," said Zhao Yong, Communist Party Secretary of Tangshan, whose brainchild "Four Points Along One Corridor" is increasingly the topic of conversations nowadays.

Zhao credits Sun Yat-sen, founder of the Republic of China, for laying out the blueprint for the Caofeidian Port 90 years ago.

He still wonders how any underwater survey could have been carried out back before sonar technology was available. But it was Zhao who, upon his assignment as the top leader of the municipality, saw the emerging port not as a standalone facility but as part of a much larger scheme that would help drive the economy of Bohai Rim.

Before he assumed power at Tangshan, a dozen "development zones" more or less had similar functions.

To integrate them into a whole and follow the trend of globalization, Caofeidian and its neighboring areas will follow the "new scientific development model" against the backdrop of the thriving northeast Asian economy.

Zhao said that he realized the similarities and made parallels with Tokyo Bay as soon as he first came to Tangshan and his view was agreed by CEO of Japan's Sumitomo Cor-



We do not copy others blindly. We always adapt others' success to our own circumstances.

ZHAO YONG
Party Secretary of Tangshan

poration as well as Japanese bankers.

Zhao himself paid several visits to Tokyo.

"The trips really boosted my confidence," he said. "You know, we are only 680 nautical miles from Kobe."

Zhao says he gets his ideas from what he sees and reads.

"I'm a voracious reader. I often get off work at 11 pm. And I've visited 40 countries and learned something from each of them."

In Sweden he came upon an "eco-city", which inspired him for the concept of the new residential town in Caofeidian.

"People associate Tangshan with heavy industry and therefore with heavy pollution. But I found out they don't have to go hand in hand."

From a trip to a family farm in Munich, Zhao learned how to install methane pits and turn waste into power in a new mode.

It was later adopted in villages in Tangshan.

"We do not copy others blindly. We always adapt others' success to our own circumstances."

He likes to go among the masses and realizes the No 1 public concern goes to eco-environment. Thus the Tangshan Bay should be built as model of circular economy.

The financial woes that currently roil Wall Street may have a short-term impact on the "major growth point" of Caofeidian and the "corridor", but Zhao is not worried about competition and comparisons with the Pearl River and Yangtze River deltas.

"The deltas in southern China got ahead by attracting manufacturers of consumer products. They have many SMEs that are under pressure of the current economic difficulties. What we need here are very large enterprises that deal with basic production commodities such as steel, ore, chemicals, oil, etc. We are in a unique position."

As well as the blessing of an undersea gully, the building of Caofeidian doesn't require a single plot of farmland.

"Where else in northern China can you find a place with such natural advantages?" Zhao asked rhetorically.

Not only is nation-building proceeding on a mammoth scale in Caofeidian and the nearby area, but downtown Tangshan is going through



A wharf in Tangshan Bay, Hebei province.

File photo

a dramatic transformation as well.

An eco-park with a lake twice as big as Hangzhou's West Lake is taking shape in the southern part of town and wide boulevards are being paved.

When Zhao first arrived in Tangshan, he was told it would be politically risky to relocate homes and factories.

But in the first year of his current job, he shut down 901

small steel plants that were heavy polluters.

This year, he has cracked down on 267 more.

In the new area along the coast, SMEs can pool together their pollutants for treatment, and a market mechanism has been set up for counting the cost of pollution.

"Don't worry about polluted air wafting inland, and there won't be any going out to the sea, either. We won't pollute

ourselves or our neighbors," contended Zhao.

For the relocation of residents, he assigned one government official for each displaced family — to help with illuminating the need for urban development, reimbursement, job training and referral.

"In the end, we did not have a single complaint or protest."

In his youth Zhao harbored

the dream of becoming a teacher.

"I've always believed teaching is a noble profession and I have the qualities to be a good teacher. But now that I'm an official I can also do good for the public. As long as that purpose is not lost, people will support me."

"Now you go to talk with any one in the street, they will be confident about the future of Tangshan," he said.