

Economic zone receives nod for expansion

China's first special economic zone (SEZ) of Shenzhen has finally received approval to expand from the central government, Shenzhen's Party chief and acting mayor Wang Rong said.

According to Wang, the central government will soon announce the expansion of the SEZ to include the entire city in a bid to accommodate its rapidly growing economy.

Wang's government work report, which he delivered on Monday at the annual plenary meeting of the city legislative body, highlighted plans for investing in areas outside the SEZ to redress existing imbalances in income, opportunity and quality of life.

Historically, the city has been divided into two parts, one of which is the SEZ. In addition to occupying one-fifth, or 400 sq km, of the city's total area, it benefits from preferential policies and has relatively independent legislative rights.

Shenzhen submitted its application to expand the SEZ last October.

Wang views the forthcoming integration of areas outside of the SEZ as a gift from the central government on the 30th anniversary of the founding of Shenzhen SEZ later this year.

He said the desired expansion approval from the government will provide fresh impetus to the local economy, as the government will support its efforts to raise the underdeveloped districts outside the SEZ to the same level.

Research conducted by the Shenzhen branch of the China Zhi Gong Dang, one of the country's eight non-Communist parties, found the industrial value generated by every square kilometer of land outside the SEZ was only one-fifth of that inside the zone.

Wang noted that while receiving expansion approval was a milestone for the city, the project itself will take several years to complete.

He said in his report that the municipal government will invest in infrastructure, as well as work toward improving the management and performance of public services in the districts outside the current SEZ.

It will build four satellite towns, including Guangming, Longhua, Dayun and Pingshan, which are expected to take shape by 2015.

During the same period, substantial progress is also expected in developing the areas of the Dapeng Peninsular and Qianhai.

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