



Hengqin New Area Expands Room for Macao's Development

Macao and Hengqin New Area are within easy reach of each other.

By staff reporter LUO YUANJUN

HENGQIN New Area was established on December 16, 2009 in southern Zhuhai City, Guangdong Province. Covering 106.46 square kilometers, it triples the size of Macao. Across a river from each other, the two are connected at their shortest distance by a bridge less than 200 meters long. Hengqin is 34 miles from Hong Kong. After the opening of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, scheduled for 2016, Hengqin will become the only national new area directly connected to Hong Kong and Macao.

A Seamless Link: Guangdong and Macao


Our *China Today* reporter happened to sit at the same table as businessman He Zhiyuan from Macao, while having breakfast at a Zhuhai hotel. He runs a factory in Zhuhai that produces traditional snacks under the "Macao Specialty" label.

"In fact, most 'Macao Specialty' products are made in Zhuhai because Macao

is so small, covering only 29 square kilometers. If you want to expand your business, you have to build your production base in Zhuhai," said He Zhiyuan. He works in Zhuhai on weekdays and rejoins his family on weekends. His car license plate has dual registration for Macao and Guangdong, making travel back and forth quite convenient.

Over the past few years, communications between China's mainland, Hong Kong and Macao have grown closer. The establishment and construction of Hengqin New Area came just at the right time. "The development of Hengqin accords with the need for deeper cooperation between China's mainland and Hong Kong and Macao. The area provides an important new platform for further cooperation between the three regions. The construction of Hengqin is also a national strategy to implement the 'one country, two systems' policy, and to maintain the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao," said Edmund Ho Hau Wah, former chief executive of Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR).

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mainland were not so common. Because commodity prices were lower on the mainland, Macao residents often traveled here to shop. Since raw meat was forbidden at customs, we often half-boiled the meat we took back to Macao. Now that goods flow smoothly between the mainland and Macao, commodity prices in Macao almost match those of the mainland. The contributions of the mainland guarantee the wellbeing of Macao people," said He Zhiyuan.

To explore new cooperation modes between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao is a noble goal for Hengqin New

Area. The new campus of the University of Macao (UM) in Hengqin is a successful example of cooperation between Guangdong and Macao. UM Rector Zhao Wei shares his view of Hengqin's contribution to the project: "Our new campus covers an area of over 1,000 *mu* (66.7 hectares). The land was acquired from many local families. I can imagine the difficulty and lengths local officials underwent to acquire the land in so short a time. I am aware that people in Hengqin have made great sacrifices. All I can say here is, thank you, thank you very much."

The UM Hengqin campus is a first in China's history, where an area on the mainland is administered by an administrative organization from a special administrative region. "It is a great initiative under the 'one country, two systems' framework. Moreover, it is an important move that shows our support for Macao's long-term prosperity and stability. The implementation of the project has won approval from all walks of life in Macao. The project shows the Chinese central government's support for Macao, achieving very good results," said Niu Jing, director of the administrative committee of Hengqin New Area.

On September 25, 2013, the first China UnionPay multi-currency card was launched in Hengqin. As an innovative step in China, cardholders can now settle accounts in non-RMB currencies such as the Hong Kong dollar and MOP (Macao Pataca) in Hong Kong, Macao and foreign countries. Cardholders in Hengqin can add MOP onto new cards and spend money in Macao at a simple swipe of the card. They can also use multi-currency credit cards to first pay in Macao, and then pay off the credit card in MOP when they get back to Hengqin. The whole process avoids the trouble of currency conversion and the risks of carrying cash. Through such bankcard payments, Guangdong and Macao have become seamlessly connected with each other.