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RACE TO RICHES

BOOM TOWN WUXI MAY SHOW WHAT'S IN STORE
AS CHINA AIMS TO JOIN THE HIGH-INCOME CLUB

By **ANDREW MOODY** and **HU HAIYAN**

Wuxi, a historic city on the Yangtze River Delta just half an hour by high-speed train from Shanghai, could be a vision of China's future.

The Chinese government in its next five-year plan is likely to set a target of becoming a high-income country by 2020.

This would mean the whole country achieving a gross national income per capita of \$12,616, more than double the 2012 level of \$5,720.

The eastern seaboard city, which has been the focus of economic activity since reform and opening-up started in the late 1970s, is already past that goal. Its 11 million residents already enjoy a per capita GNI of \$20,400, nearly four times the national average.

There are also villages within the Wuxi administrative region such as Huaxi, Jiuxing and Tengou that are among the richest in China. These are where multi-millionaire entrepreneurs from Jiangsu province, whose enterprises stretch not just across China but also increasingly Africa, have

their luxury homes.

The area's economy is to some extent built on light industry such as textiles, apparel, electronics and other consumer products. It is also the home of China's Hollywood with Wuxi Film Studios now doing post-production for a number of US blockbuster films.

Jack Wu, 48-year-old president of Jim Brothers, based in the Lihu Science and Industrial Innovation Park, one of five industrial parks in the Binhu district of the city, says people now enjoy an almost Western lifestyle in the city.

His company, which employs 118, is an e-commerce business that makes bespoke shirts. Customers just need to send an emailed image of themselves from which their precise measurements can be calculated.

"Living and working here is certainly better than China's major cities. There is less pollution, the environment is better and property costs are probably 30 percent lower than in Beijing, whereas income levels over the past three or five years have been actually higher than in the capital."

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