



From left: The 2015 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair held in November was China's first global innovation and entrepreneurship fair. Investors socialize during the fair. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chengdu accelerates pace of innovation

City aims to become global-level center for startup and entrepreneurship, as **Huang Zhiling** and **Ou Yuanxi** report.

In a meeting early this year, the State Council lauded Chengdu's campaign in boosting entrepreneurship and innovation, and plans to provide it with more support policies.

The city has made great achievements in encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation by building platforms and formulating policies.

Achievements impress

On Feb 8, 2015, Venture Tianfu-Jingronghui was launched in Chengdu as a brand event serving as a communication platform for innovators, investors and entrepreneurs.

The event is held each month and has become an important part of Chengdu's mass innovation strategy.

Many other activities have been held in affiliation with Venture Tianfu-Jingronghui, attracting attention from venture investment institutions, startups, university students and innovators.

Many venture investment institutions including SBCVC, Sequoia Capital and IDG Capital Partners, thousands of startups and more than 10,000 university students and innovators have participated in the activities. Deals have been signed involving investment intentions of more than 1 billion yuan (\$153.5 million) presented at these activities.

In 2015, Chengdu hosted a series of international and domestic activities to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation. It backed or held entrepreneurship and innovation competitions for local youths and students from local institutions of higher learning.

The city took advantage of major international events such as the West China International Fair, EU-China Business and Technology Cooperation Fair and 2015 Western China Overseas High-Tech and High Talents Conference to conduct exchanges on entrepreneurship and help little-known



Tianfu Software Park is home to many startups. In April of last year, the Chengdu city government published its Tianfu Entrepreneurship Action Plan. The plan, to be implemented from 2015 to 2025, is aimed at turning the city into the first choice for enterprising professionals to realize their dreams.

entrepreneurs gain exposure.

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On Feb 16, the city government information office held a news conference announcing its most favorable policies intended to attract talent.

At the conference, the Chengdu city government said it has established a fund of 50 million yuan to encourage winners of major research prizes such as the Nobel Prize to start businesses in Chengdu.

Up to 100 million yuan could be granted to a research team, the government said, as it strives to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

Chengdu will issue five-year residency certificates and five-year, multi-entry visas for award-winning foreign talent — and their spouses and children — who agree to set up startups in the city, said Jing

Bin, head of the city's human resources office.

Researchers whose firms maintain a presence in the city for more than five years and contribute to the city's economic and social development are in line to receive a financial reward of 1 million yuan, he said.

The city's new policy stresses that the fund is for both international and domestic talent.

Each year, Chengdu will select around 100 talented individuals, such as local university students who have established innovative startups, and provide each of them with up to 200,000 yuan, Jing said.

To further encourage entrepreneurship, Chengdu has built incubators including Tianfu Software Park, Bio Tianfu and 35 Hongxing Road. It has introduced domestically and internationally famous incubators such as the Optics Valley Startup Café.

In November, China and South Korea announced they would build a Sino-Korean innovation and entrepreneurship park in Chengdu.

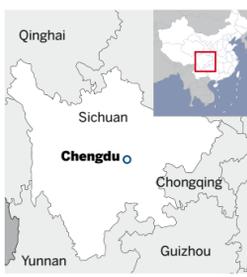
The park, which is intended to become a platform for scientists and tech firms from both countries to turn their research results into marketable products, means more development opportunities for Chengdu.

Chengdu was named one of 15 model cities for innovation and entrepreneurship of small and micro-firms by five central government departments in China in June.

Two months later, the Chinese-language Fortune magazine listed Chengdu among the top 10 innovative cities in China.

Top choice for top talent

The concept of mass entrepreneurship and innovation was first proposed by Premier Li Keqiang during the World Economic Forum in Septem-



50 million yuan

toward a city fund to reward top researchers who create startups in Chengdu

ber 2014, and reiterated during the current two sessions in Beijing.

The premier said China's development strategy is one driven by innovation, and the country encourages mass entrepreneurship and innovation.

He highlighted mass entrepreneurship and innovation as new engines to spur growth in the government work report he delivered in March 2015.

Since then, both have gained momentum across the country, and Chengdu is no exception.

Chengdu aims at becoming the first choice for entrepreneurs, and a world-famous city for entrepreneurship and the realization of people's dreams for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Chengdu, a center of science and technology in southwestern China, can be a strong backer of entrepreneurship and innovation thanks to its advantage in human resources.

The city has 53 major institutions of higher learning including Sichuan University, the Electronic Science and Technology University of China and South-

west Jiaotong University, 30 national scientific research institutes including the Chengdu branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and 45 national key laboratories such as those in the fields of polymer materials, electronic thin films and integrated devices.

Attractive globally

Chengdu hosted the 2015 Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair last November.

It was China's first global innovation and entrepreneurship fair and drew government officials and representatives from risk investment organizations, scientific research institutes, institutions of higher learning and innovative enterprises in 30 countries and regions.

The Chengdu Consensus was reached during the fair.

Some 150 institutional investors took part in the fair with 2,686 projects, 109 of which changed hands with transactions totaling 5.32 billion yuan.

Participants from home and abroad praised Chengdu as the host city.

Zhang Zhihong is chief of the Torch High Technology Industry Development Center of China's Ministry of Science and Technology in Beijing.

He said he considers Chengdu a charming city.

It previously impressed visitors as a city of fine food, long history and a happy lifestyle for locals, he said, but it now may have a new label as a city for enterprising people to realize their dreams.

EBN is a network of about 150 quality-certified EU business and innovation centers, and organizations backing innovative entrepreneurs, startups, and small and medium-sized firms.

Its president Alvaro Simon de Blas said that his brief vis-

it to Chengdu during the fair revealed to him a promising city in western China. The vigor and potential of innovative firms there left a deep impression on him.

He said Chengdu is similar to EBN in backing the development of small and medium-sized firms.

Chengdu has a very good environment for being innovative and enterprising and has a longstanding friendship and cooperation with the European Union, he said.

It also has many opportunities to encourage and attract EBN to develop in the city, according to the president.

In the wake of its success in 2015, the Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair will be held in Chengdu again this year.

About a week after the 2015 fair, the Chengdu High-Tech Zone in Chengdu signed a deal with the 2009 Nobel laureate in medicine to build a nucleic acid research institute.

Jack Szostak, a joint winner of the 2009 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine



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of nucleic acids in Chengdu.

Jack Szostak is one of the three American winners of the 2009 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for the discovery of how chromosomes are protected, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a professor at the Harvard Medical School. He already has one long-time friend in the province.

Huang Zhen, a professor with the School of Life Sciences at Sichuan University, was Szostak's student at Harvard Medical School many years ago.

Sichuan University first set up the nucleic acid research institute in May to coincide with the fifth International Conference on Chemical and Structural Biology of Nucleic Acids and Proteins in Chengdu.

Szostak received an invitation to the conference.

During his stay in Chengdu, he visited both the Chengdu High-Tech Zone and its Tianfu Life Sciences Park to learn about the city's biopharmaceutical sector.

Chengdu's environment that encourages entrepreneurs and innovation, abundant human resources and solid industrial foundation lured the Nobel laureate from Harvard University.

Last year, during a Venture Tianfu-Jingronghui event held in Boston, Szostak agreed to build the nucleic research institute in Chengdu.

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The Venture Tianfu project is lending a hand to investors and business owners. XIE MINGGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY