Guangzhou in bid to become talent hot spot

Latest events focus on innovation, cooperation

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Technology and innovation are being emphasized at the latest edition of a decades-old recruitment drive for overseas talent for the development of Guangzhou and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The 2021 Convention on Exchange of Overseas Talents and the Guangzhou Convention of Overseas Chinese Scholars in Science and Technology begin on Friday in Guangzhou, the capital city of southern Guangdong province.

With the theme of "talents, innovation, win-win", the conventions aim to introduce high-caliber individuals from overseas to China and particularly the Greater Bay Area, which covers nine cities in Guangdong province and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions, and to provide these individuals with networking opportunities and other professional services.

The events are hosted by the Ministry of Education, the Overseas-Educated Scholars Association of China and the Guangzhou government.

The conventions focus on facilitating talent supply to emerging industries of strategic importance as outlined in China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), and frontier technology sectors, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology and new energy.

The events are to be attended by noted experts, business executives, officials, overseas talent and potential Chinese employers.

The overseas talent include Chinese studying or working overseas and foreign professionals and students. The potential Chinese employers include universities, research institutes, technology companies and science parks.

The experts include nearly 20 academicians from China and abroad. Among them are Zhong Nanshan, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, Edvard Moser, a member of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters; Mohamad Sawan, a member of the Canadian Academy of Engineering; and Chen Shiyi, a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

An online event is being held on Friday to mark the opening of the conventions.

The main activities of the conventions, including themed forums, roadshows and field trips, will be held at later dates, the organizers said.

One of the forums, themed around attracting talent to the Greater Bay Area, will invite high-level professionals from overseas to share their views on topics such as how to introduce, utilize and retain overseas talent in an efficient manner and how to create an enabling environment for overseas talent looking to start businesses in the region.

The founding teams of technology unicorns, top young technology talent, trailblazing innovators and foreign experts working in Guangzhou will share their entrepreneurial experiences and stories about life in the city at an event for overseas talent looking to start businesses in the Greater Bay Area.

The 2021 list of startup companies with the most potential for growth that are established by returned overseas-educated Chinese will be released by the China alliance for services for returned overseas-educated Chinese during the conventions, as a way to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, according to the organizers.

Shortlisted entries for the 16th Chunhui Cup Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, hosted by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology, will be exhibited during the conventions.

The main functions of the conventions are accessible on the event's upgraded website, where users can visit 3D virtual booths, take part in online forums and learn about the latest policies.

To facilitate recruitment activities amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the website has set up dedicated recruitment sections for overseas Chinese, foreigners, State-owned enterprises and emerging industries.

The organizers have adopted measures to establish longstanding platforms to serve talent when the conventions are not in session.

The measures include building entrepreneurial services and cooperation parks for returned overseas-educated Chinese in collaboration with 15 science parks, and making the online services on the official website and WeChat account available after the conclusion of the conventions.

The 2020 edition of the conventions were effective in serving the needs of returned overseas-educated Chinese amid COVID-19-induced challenges, according to the organizers. Consisting of both online and in-person activities, the 2020 edition attracted nearly 5,000 talents from 41 countries and regions including the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and Canada.

SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

From left: The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area National Technological Innovation Center is located in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. Researchers work at a lab of Guangzhou CanSemi Technology. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Science and technology playing key role in city's global development

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Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong province, is making efforts to accelerate its construction as a city of scientific and technological innovation with global influence.

With the China-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City and Nansha Science City in Guangzhou, the city plans to form a scientific and technological innovation axis and become the core engine of an international science and technology innovation center in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, said Wang Guilin, director of Guangzhou Municipal Science and Technology Bureau.

Last year, Guangzhou spent 77.48 billion yuan ($12.2 billion) on research and development, which is doubles that of 2015. Among them, the basic research investment reached 11 billion yuan, accounting for 14.2 percent of the total. The percentage is a record and significantly higher than the national average figure, at 6 percent.

Wang said that Guangzhou will continue to expand R&D investment during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) and improve the investment structure for better performance.

In fundamental research, Guangzhou has created a scientific and technological innovation system with two national platforms, two major basic research projects and many high-level scientific and technological innovation platforms.

The two national platforms are Guangzhou Laboratory, which has made important progress in COVID-19 scientific research, and the National Technology Innovation Center of the Bay Area, which focuses on integrated circuits and key software, intelligent manufacturing and equipment.

The two major research projects are a cold-seep seafloor ecosystem research device and a human cell spectrum research facility, which are both listed in the 14th Five-Year Plan.

Guangzhou also has many high-level science and technology innovation platforms, including the Advanced Display Technology Innovation Center, Bioland Laboratory and other provincial laboratories.

During the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the number of high-tech companies in Guangzhou increased several times to 12,000.

Wang said that to further promote the development of high-tech companies, the Guangzhou government will provide financial support. Priority will be given to those that attempt to solve major industrial bottlenecks. The city will offer up to 10 million yuan to approved projects.

The government will also improve science and technology financing and encourage 23 cooperative banks to offer loans to small and medium-sized enterprises in the city that are included in the credit risk compensation fund pool.

The local government will establish a market-based merger and acquisition fund for technology enterprises with a total scale of 20 billion yuan.

According to Wang, Guangzhou will support leading high-tech companies to build more than 30 high-level research institutes, guide enterprises to strengthen intellectual property protection in independent research and development, and increase the number of high-value patent applications.

In the meantime, the city released a three-year action plan (2021-23) to boost the high-quality development of artificial intelligence.

The government plans to build 10 AI industrial parks, launch 100 typical AI application scenarios and foster around 1,000 AI companies.

By 2023, the city is expected to rank among the best nationwide in the AI sector and establish an innovative and coordinated industrial chain. To attract more foreign professionals, Guangzhou will improve the talent green card and chief service officer system.

To date, there are 119 academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering working in Guangzhou and some 10,000 people have obtained talent green cards.

Overseas Chinese return to start up businesses

By LI YOU
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Yan Guangmei, former vice-president of Sun Yat-sen University, has had a career committed to pharmacological research, and after studying and working abroad for years, he finally made the decision to return to Guangzhou.

Yan studied and worked abroad in the United States from 1991 to 1996. During that time, his wife and children adapted to American life and their income was good. However, in 1996, he made up his mind to return to the university and serve as vice-president.

"Before I went abroad, I already knew I was going to come back," Yan said, adding that he even packed up a set of Chinese primary school textbooks for his children when he left.

Before going abroad, he was an associate professor at Sun Yat-sen University of Medical Sciences. He revisited the university when he came back to visit his family.

"The university was at a low ebb at the time. As I graduated from this university, I have an attachment to it. I promised to the school leaders that I would come back," Yan said.

After his return, he tried to help out students abroad who wanted to come back, in a bid to encourage more talent to settle down in Guangzhou.

In 1998, the first Convention of Overseas Chinese Scholars in Science and Technology took place in Guangzhou. It blazed a trail in introducing overseas scholars to China for entrepreneurship on a large scale.

The activities attracted a number of talents, among which many were engaged in academic research and had become well-known professors and academicians.

"I feel that the environment for entrepreneurship has improved. For example, the development of new drugs requires the cooperation of other disciplines and industries. You could not find a partner before, but now in Guangzhou, especially in the Guangzhou Development District, this is no longer the case," Yan said.

Zhou Zhen participated in the Guangzhou Convention of Overseas Chinese Scholars in Science and Technology in 2002 and now he is the chairman of Guangzhou Hexin Instrument.

Back in 2004 when he returned to China and set up his business, there were far more difficulties than now, Zhou said, and there was little venture capital and angel investment at that time. The scientific instruments they were developing were strange to people.

Zhou cherished the office rental discounts and the entrepreneurial environment in Guangzhou, enjoying a two-year rent-free policy for the 2,000 square-meter work space.

"We were operating at a loss from 2004 to 2014, but we were able to survive," Zhou said.

"I think our company's efforts are far from enough. China requires a wealth of scholars who make high-end scientific instruments. More channels are available now.

"The Convention on Exchange of Overseas Talents gradually has become a benchmark," Zhou added.