

CHENGDU REPORT

CITY SET TO BECOME INTL EXCHANGE CENTER

Region expands its influence with numerous official partnerships to emerge as western China's collaborative hub

By ZHUAN TI
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Chengdu, a mega city in western China, is looking to deepen communications and cooperation with its sister cities to build itself into a regional center of international exchange.

A media delegation from Chengdu made a trip to its sister cities in Japan and South Korea from Oct 20 to 26 to learn more about both the cities' cooperation agreements of the past and possible avenues of collaboration in the future.

"When it comes to innovation and entrepreneurship, Chengdu is a very vibrant city that is at the forefront of such efforts in southwestern China," said Hong Seong-hoa, ambassador for International Relations of Busan, South Korea.

Hong told the delegates that Busan values its cooperative relationship with Chengdu.

The city signed an agreement with Chengdu High-tech Zone to boost industrial cooperation at the end of last year, and a number of companies from Busan have already settled in the high-tech zone.

Hong paid a visit to the zone in June during the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, an international platform promoting the exchange and transaction of innovative ideas and achievements.

He said Chengdu High-tech Zone provides companies with complete infrastructure as well as support in fields such as intellectual property protec-

tion and talent introduction, which, he added, impressed him greatly.

"Chengdu is the starting point of the Southern Silk Road, while Busan is a port city linking Europe and Asia. The two cities share similar opportunities," Hong said, as he stressed the importance of deeper ties with Chengdu in the future.

Hong said that, like Chengdu, Busan is planning to build a new airport, which is expected to go into operation by 2025. He expects that Busan will have direct flights to Chengdu by that time.

Park Bo-saeng, mayor of Gimcheon, a city located between Seoul and Busan, said he has been amazed by the speed at which Chengdu has developed since the two cities established ties in 1996.

"Chengdu has greatly enlarged its international circle of friends over the years, yet, despite this, its exchanges with Gimcheon have never reduced," said Park.

The two cities hold at least four exchange activities every year and hold numerous cultural activities, according to Park.

Park was named an Honorary Citizen by the Chengdu city government in June.

"This is a great honor for me. I will work hard to promote bilateral exchanges and cooperation between the two cities," he said.

Artists from Gimcheon are scheduled to visit Chengdu once again in November, according to the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon.

In March, the two cities held a symposium on Korean and Chinese pottery culture in Mingyue International

Ceramic Arts Village in Chengdu's Pujiang county.

The Chengdu Mingyue Ceramic Society and the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon signed an agreement to boost mutual exchanges in ceramic arts and jointly develop the Korean and Chinese ceramics and fine arts markets.

A Gimcheon ceramic arts museum was also opened in the village during the event.

Ties between Chengdu and South Korea have deepened since a South Korean consulate was opened in the city in 2005.

By the end of last year, 179 South Korean companies had invested in Chengdu.

In October 2015, the Chinese and South Korean governments agreed that the two countries would together establish a China-South Korea Innovation and Entrepreneurship Park in Chengdu.

It is hoped that the park will become a landmark project with a global reputation through the collaboration between China's burgeoning spirit of mass entrepreneurship and innovation and South Korea's creative economy.

The China-South Korea Innovation and Entrepreneurship Park is being established in the Jingrong International Plaza, as was agreed in April between the Chengdu High-tech Zone and Korea Investment Partners, a venture capital investment company owned by Korea Investment Holdings.

The two sides also agreed to establish a 500 million yuan (\$74.8 million) fund to support innovative enterprises and startups.



Top left and top right: Delegates communicate at a forum for Chengdu's sister cities during the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair in Chengdu in June. PHOTOS BY PENG CHAO / CHINA DAILY Above left: A media delegation from Chengdu conducts an interview with Park Bo-saeng, mayor of Gimcheon. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Above right: The Chengdu Mingyue Ceramic Society and the Fine Arts Association of Gimcheon sign an agreement to boost mutual exchanges in ceramic arts. LIU ZHAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Kofu friendship reflects stronger cooperation

By ZHUAN TI

With its opening-up accelerated in recent years, Chengdu has strengthened exchanges and cooperation with Japan, especially with its sister city Kofu.

Chengdu established sister city relations with Kofu, a city in Japan's Yamanashi prefecture, in September 1984. It has since gradually developed and deepened bilateral exchanges and cooperation with Kofu in education, culture, business and trade.

"I first went to Chengdu 16 years ago. It surprised me so much when I went to the city again this year during the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair in June," said Yuichi Higuchi, mayor of Kofu.

Higuchi speaks highly of the eco-

nomical development of Chengdu. He said what impressed him most was the large number of world-class hotel brands in the city, which indicates the frequent international exchanges between Chengdu and the world.

He also appreciates Chengdu's experience in innovation and entrepreneurship, especially the transformation of scientific research achievements at its universities into commercial production through cooperation with local companies. He said Kofu will learn from the experiences at Chengdu.

Higuchi loves Chengdu for its time-honored history and culture, as well as its beautiful scenery.

"Both cities are famous for their rich tourism resources. I look forward to seeing more cultural and tourism exchanges between Kofu and Chengdu,

and I'm willing to make the effort for that to happen," he said.

Higuchi believes the two cities have great potential to develop cooperation in the rail transit industry as well, since both cities are important transportation hubs in their regions.

Hasegawa Yoshidaka, director of education for the city, said he would like to promote bilateral exchanges between Kofu and Chengdu in education by supporting more students and teachers to visit and study in each other's cities.

Although he hasn't visited Chengdu for 30 years, Hasegawa said he has paid close attention to the educational exchanges between the two cities.

Kofu and Chengdu have established long-term and stable cooperation in youth exchanges. Every five years, each of them will send 22 junior high school

students and two senior high school students to the other city.

Chengdu established its first sister city relationship in 1981 with Montpellier in France. In recent years, the city has rapidly expanded its friend circle. Currently it has 32 sister cities and has established friendly cooperation with another 39 cities.

The city won the International Friendship-City Exchanges and Cooperation Award for the third straight time during a recent selection of outstanding international friendship cities by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the China International Friendship Cities Association.

The award is the highest honor in China for cities that have contributed to friendly exchanges and cooperation between the country and the world.



Media delegates from Chengdu take a photo with government officials of Kofu. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Opening up to the rest of the world

By ZHUAN TI

Backed by the central government's strategy to deepen the opening-up of western China, Chengdu, a hub city in the region, is expanding its ties with the outside world.

Switzerland is scheduled to open a consulate general in the city in November to promote business between the two countries and further boost Sino-Swiss bilateral relations.

It is the 16th foreign consulate approved to open in Chengdu. The city has the largest number of foreign consulates in western China.

An official opening ceremony for the consulate general has been scheduled for early 2017.

This will be Switzerland's fifth official representation in China, in addition to the embassy in Beijing and the consulates general in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

The consulate general will serve the western China region, covering the provinces of Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Chongqing Municipality.

"Opening the consulate general in Chengdu recognizes the exciting prospects this city and region hold for Sino-Swiss relations," said Swiss Ambassador to China Jean-Jacques de Dardel.

The new consulate general will focus on the economy, trade, innovation and tourism. It will also contribute to the cultural exchanges between China and Switzerland, according to Frank Eggmann, the new consul general.

Chengdu is also strengthening its connection with the world with more international flights.

During the 22nd World Route



A Chengdu Europe Express Rail train arrives back at Chengdu on Sept 6 last year, completing the return trip for the first time. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Development Forum, one of the biggest annual events for the global civil aviation sector held in Chengdu in September, the Chengdu city government, together with Sichuan Province Airport Group, signed agreements with six airlines to open nine nonstop air routes departing from Chengdu.

The Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport has opened nearly 100 international routes, connecting it to more than 70 international cities including San Francisco, Paris, Frankfurt, Melbourne and Doha.

Chengdu began construction of its new Chengdu Tianfu International Airport in May. The long-term target for the airport is to have six runways, with an annual capacity of 90 million passengers and 2 million metric tons of cargo.

The city is also operating the Chengdu Europe Express Rail, the fastest

and most frequently used express rail service linking China and Europe. Launched in April 2013, the express rail has expanded to Kutno, Poland, and Nuremberg, Germany.

According to the latest plans for the Chengdu-Europe Plus Strategy, Chengdu will operate three major cargo rail routes to Europe, heading to Lodz in Poland, Moscow in Russia and Istanbul in Turkey.

By the end of last year, Chengdu had direct economic and trade relations with 223 major cities worldwide, including 20 that have opened trade and tourism offices in the city. It is also home to 278 Fortune Global 500 companies, the largest number in central and western China.

Chengdu has been designated by the central government to be a national central city, garnering more attention for the city and region.

Historic gateway forges links around the globe

By ZHUAN TI

Chengdu, an inland city with international acclaim, opened its doors to the outside world 30 years ago, and is striving to re-mold itself as western China's gateway to the outside world.

It established its first sister-city relationship on June 22, 1981, with Montpellier in France, which marked a beginning for the city, situated in the heartland of China, reaching out to shake hands with cities around the globe.

On Oct 16, 1985, the first consulate in the city, the US consulate general, was opened in Chengdu. Today, Chengdu has the third-highest number of foreign consulates in China.

In December 1993, Procter & Gamble Co, PepsiCo Inc and TCL Communication Ltd, under its Alcatel

brand, set up operations in Chengdu, as the first group of Fortune 500 companies to establish a presence in the city.

Over the past 30 years, "made in Chengdu" brand products, such as the first Boeing 787 rudder and Toyota Coaster, have been exported around the world. Half of the world's laptop chips and two thirds of Apple Inc's iPads are made in Chengdu.

Over the past five years, Chengdu has introduced more than 10 new international conventions each year on average, including the 2013 Fortune Global Forum, the 12th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, and the 22nd World Route Development Forum.

Many distinguished foreign guests have visited the city in recent years,

including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, former British prime minister David Cameron and US First Lady Michelle Obama.

On May 28, 2006, KLM Royal Dutch Airlines launched a non-stop flight between Chengdu and Amsterdam, the first non-stop flight linking Chengdu with Europe.

On April 26, 2013, Chengdu launched an express rail service to Lodz, Poland, in line with the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiatives proposed by President Xi Jinping. It is the fastest and most frequently used express rail service linking China and Europe.

On June 11, 2014, United Airlines Inc launched the Chengdu-San Francisco route, the first non-stop route linking China's central and western regions to the United States.