

CHENGDU REPORT



STUDENTS pose with a badminton robot developed by their startup, Chengdu Champion Robot Co Ltd. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Startups welcome support from govt

By ZHUAN TI

With comprehensive support systems and resources for startups, not to mention an enviable quality of life, Chengdu is attracting a growing number of companies and entrepreneurs.

Chen Jun, former senior executive of the southwest branch of Tencent Holdings Ltd, quit his job in 2013 and established an internet company in the Chengdu Tianfu Software Park.

His company, Tomasky Information Co Ltd, has developed a free management system for small hotels. It enables hoteliers to handle procedures such as checking in and out, taking bookings and room inquiries with either a computer or a smartphone.

Currently, the software has more than 60,000 users at 500 tourist destinations around the world, including popular cities in China, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

The company is planning to expand the market by offering personalized services and guidance to hoteliers using big data analytics, Chen said.

"The city has many high-quality universities and a large human resources pool, but housing prices and living expenses here are much lower than those in Beijing and Shanghai," he said.

Chengdu is also a well-known tourist destination, enabling his company to conduct market research and promotions more conveniently.

"Another reason for me to choose Chengdu is the local government's strong support for startup companies," Chen said.

The Chengdu Hi-tech Zone provided free offices for his company's first year of operation, and thereafter offered rent subsidies. As an outstanding entrepreneur, Sichuan province listed Chen on its 1,000 professionals program and gave him an award of 1 million yuan (\$145,331).

To make the city a top choice for professionals to develop new ideas or start businesses, Chengdu announced in February that it would adopt a new human resources policy and establish a fund of up to 2 billion yuan.

For Nobel Prize laureates who launch startups in Chengdu, the government financial aid could reach 50 million yuan. Up to 100 million yuan could be granted to a research team.

Chen said he also enjoys the laid-back lifestyle in Chengdu and its delicious food.

"An increasing number of professionals from first-tier cities are seeking opportunities in Chengdu," he said. "Once they come, many of them never want to leave."

Students and alumni give back

City to become a tech hub in western China, **Zhuan Ti** reports.

Chengdu, a megacity in western China, is gathering its strengths in science and technology to achieve its goal of becoming a nationally central city.

Its ambition is supported by the numerous universities and high-tech companies in the city.

Chengdu Champion Robot Co Ltd, a startup company established by students at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, is about to move into a newly launched Makerspace at the university for further development.

The Makerspace, covering a total area of 16,000 square meters, is a platform for students to incubate their scientific and technological achievements.

Zhou Jinting, president of Shanghai Hefu Artificial Intelligence Group Co Ltd, who invested in the Makerspace, said the platform will focus on a variety of areas and industries, such as intelligent robots, metallurgy, construction, coal and chemical engineering.

Huang Shan, CEO of Champion Robot, said her company had received a 5 million yuan (\$726,333) angel investment from Hefu Artificial Intelligence Group, and it expects to raise 20 million yuan of investment in the first round of financing.

During his visit to Chengdu in April, Premier Li Keqiang played badminton with a robot designed by the company.



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MA YANHE
DIRECTOR OF THE TIANJIN INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY OF THE CHINESE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Huang said the badminton robot was brought to market in March. Her company has sold a dozen of the robots, generating 4 million yuan in sales.

The company has more than 40 patents, with the core ones focusing on the field of motion control, vision, image processing, navigation and positioning, according to Huang.

She said her company is planning to apply the technology to a wider area and develop more robot products with different functions.

"Moving into the Makerspace will save costs and help us to bring new products to the market," she said.

The university has established an institute of innovation and entrepreneurship to provide students who are starting a business with

guidance in fields such as business management, marketing, patents and laws, she said.

Many institutions of higher learning in Chengdu are boosting innovation and entrepreneurship through cooperation with the city government.

Universities such as UESTC, Sichuan University and Southwest Jiaotong University are building innovation and entrepreneurship platforms around campus to harness their students' achievements in science and technology.

Chengdu has signed strategic cooperation agreements with five universities in the city and the Chengdu branch of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to build world-class universities and scientific institutions.

In August, the Chengdu city government signed an agreement with the Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences to build a research and development center for biotechnology at Chengdu Science City in Chengdu Tianfu New Area, a national-level new area.

"We don't merely bring our technologies to Chengdu," said Ma Yanhe, director of the institute. "We will bring our high-level expert team to the city to work in scientific and technological innovation, R&D and incubation."

Previously, the institute transferred some patent technologies to Chengdu Yuanhong Biotech Co Ltd,

an emerging biotech company.

Huang Mingliang, chairman of Chengdu Yuanhong Biotech Co Ltd, said the company will launch a production line for myo-inositol, an essential material for the growth of humans and animals, in December.

The production line will have an annual production capacity of 5,000 metric tons of myo-inositol. It will adopt the world-leading extract techniques and technology from the Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, he said.

The products have a broad range of applications in pharmaceutical, food and fodder industries.

Huang Mingliang said the company has set up biotechnology cooperation platforms in a number of countries and regions for further development, including Canada, the United States, Israel and France and Hong Kong.

He is also executive vice-chairman and secretary-general of the recently established Global Alumni Entrepreneurs Association of Sichuan University.

He said the association will gather and integrate global sources in the biopharmaceutical field through the influence of the university and its alumni entrepreneurs, so as to boost international cooperation and help to develop the biological industries in Chengdu.

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