



Sichuan's banking, insurance and financial authorities share one building in Chengdu to enhance administration. PHOTOS ROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Intl conference injects new vigor to metropolis

By LI YU and PENG CHAO

Experts believe the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting that was held in Chengdu, a mega city in western China, last weekend, will help to further invigorate the city's development and accelerate its internationalization.

At the meeting in Chengdu, delegates discussed issues concerning the global economy, frameworks for strong, sustainable and balanced growth and investment and infrastructure, with the aim of finding a new driving force for the global economy.

"It's no coincidence that Chengdu was chosen as the host city for the G20 meeting. The city has become a top destination for global events because of its outstanding economic development and progress in opening-up," said Yu Jianwei, executive dean of the Institute of Economic Development at Sichuan University.

China's "Go West" strategy has given it global appeal, while Chengdu continues to lead the development process in the west of the country, bringing the city sharply into global focus, Yu said.

Chengdu is an emerging star on China's economic landscape. Its GDP was 1.08 trillion yuan (\$161 billion) last year, an increase of 7.9 percent year-on-year. It also utilized \$7.5 billion of overseas investment during the same period.

The Milken Institute, an independent American economic think tank, ranked the city top of its list of China's best-performing cities. The World Bank deemed Chengdu as a "benchmark city for the investment environment in inland China."

"The city started to boost opening-up and internationalization ahead of many other cities, and it has greatly expanded global cooperation and exchanges in recent years," Yu said.

The city is no longer simply a place of giant pandas, delicious food and beautiful landscapes. It is now also a thoroughly modern city with 89 international air routes, 271 Fortune Global 500 companies, 15 foreign consulates, and the largest number of international brands in western China.

By the end of last year, the city had direct economic and trade relations with 223 major cities worldwide, including 20 that have opened trade and tourism offices in the city.

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.

During a state visit to China in 2013, then British prime minister David Cameron made Chengdu his last stop. Cameron said he was impressed by the city's picturesque landscapes and rapid economic development. He stated that he could see the future of western China in Chengdu.

In July 2014, German Chancellor Angela Merkel chose Chengdu as the first stop on

“Chengdu has become a top destination for global events because of its outstanding development and progress in opening-up.”

Yu Jianwei, executive dean of the Institute of Economic Development at Sichuan University

her seventh official trip to China. She visited the FAW-Volkswagen factory, took a class in Sichuan cooking and attended a forum on urbanization.

"By playing host to international events and distinguished foreign guests, Chengdu has become increasingly well known and better connected to the world, and, as a result, it has become a new driving force for the region's development," Yu said.

New development wave

Yu noted that planning for the Chengdu-Chongqing city cluster, which was issued in May by the central government, requested that Chengdu build itself into a national hub city, and this is also a new drive for the city's economic development and opening-up.

He believes that Chengdu is more competitive than many other cities in China because of its large talent pool, solid foundation in high-tech industries and the local government's support for innovative development.

"The new round of development is no longer dependent on investment, but on technological innovation, talents and the business environment," Yu said, adding that an increasing number of both domestic and foreign talents have chosen to either work or start a business in Chengdu in recent years.

The city is home to 53 universities with 700,000 students, and 280,000 scholars graduate from its universities annually.

It also has 30 State-level research institutes, 10 key national laboratories and some 100 vocational and technical colleges.

To ensure that Chengdu becomes the logical choice for talented professionals looking to develop new ideas or start businesses, the city announced on Feb 14 that it had adopted 10 new policies to achieve the goal, as well as the establishment of a fund of up to 2 billion yuan.

By the end of last year, Chengdu had recruited 34 academicians and 169 national-level experts through China's 1,000 Talents Plan. Those figures lead the nation.



SCAN IT! See more on chinadaily.com.cn

Major event expected to boost city's financial sector

G20 meeting brainstorms global economic trends and hot issues in Chengdu

By LI YU and PENG CHAO

The G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting held in Chengdu from July 23-24 is expected to boost the development of the city's financial sector and help it achieve its goal of becoming a financial center in western China.

The G20 event drew finance ministers and central bank governors from the G20 members and guest countries, as well as the principals of international financial organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and OECD. Delegates discussed the world's current economic trends and issues and shared their views and insights about future economic growth prospects.

As one of the most important global events, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting is generally held in either the capitals or economic centers of G20 members. This was the first time the meeting had been held in western China.

Yan Xing, deputy director of the Chengdu Academy of Social Sciences, said Chengdu was chosen as host city for the G20 meeting thanks to its well-developed financial industry, as well as its growing economic strength and international reputation.

As the birthplace of *jiaozhi*, the world's earliest form of paper currency, which appeared in the city in the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), Chengdu has a prominent place in China's financial history.

Since being designated by the State Council as the financial center of the south-western region in the 1990s, Chengdu has been upgrading its financial sector. It is planning to build itself into a financial center in China's western region by 2020 and regain its glory in history.

Yan said the city's development is backed by the central government's strategy to develop key projects including the Belt and Road Initiative, national comprehensive reform pilot zones, and Tianfu New Area.

By the end of May, Chengdu was home to more than 400 financial institutions, including 16 foreign banks and 17 foreign insurance companies, according to the Chengdu Financial Office.

A number of foreign financial institutions, including Citibank, HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, Royal Bank of Scotland and JP Morgan Chase, have opened branches in the city.

The number of foreign financial institutions in Chengdu ranks ahead of other cities in central and western China.

Last year, the added value of the city's financial sector



A street view of the Luomashi provincial-level of Financial Service Area in Chengdu. The city banks on its future on the financial sector.



A glance of the Chengdu Financial City. The area, covering five square kilometers, is under construction. It is expected to become West China's financial hub.



125.4 billion yuan

the added value of Chengdu's financial sector last year

15.5 percent

the growth of the added value of the city's financial sector in 2015

11.6 percent

the city's financial sector's contribution to local GDP

40 billion yuan

the first phase investment of Chengdu Qianhai Industrial Investment Fund — a fund to encourage the financial sector in the city

Paper notes gain currency

The earliest paper currency in the world was called *jiaozhi*, which appeared in the early Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) in Chengdu.

Jiaozhi was first issued by merchants in Chengdu, and it was printed with houses, trees, men and cipher using black ink. There were also banknote seals at the top of each note to prevent counterfeiting.

There was also an inscription saying that except in Sichuan, the note could be used instead of metal coins. The notes replaced metal coins due to both an increase in trade and the high demand for currency.

Chengdu was one of the most prosperous cities in China at the time. It was the starting point of the Southern Silk Road, which connects the city to the Southern and Central Asia.

As the use of paper currency spread, the local government in Chengdu established an early type of savings bank, known as the Office of *jiaozhi*, to handle the issuance of *jiaozhi*.

In 1024, Song Dynasty authorities began issuing official *jiaozhi*, although they banned the private issuance of the notes.



Jiaozhi, China's earliest currency, is born in Chengdu.

Paper currency was more widely used during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), as the Italian traveler Marco Polo recorded in his notes. Experts believe that the issuing of paper currency in European countries might have been influenced by China.

Jiaozhi predated the appearance of paper money in the West by almost 600 years.

PENG CHAO AND LI YU

was 125.4 billion yuan (\$20.5 billion), a 15.5 percent increase on the previous year.

The financial sector accounts for 11.6 percent of Chengdu's GDP.

The city has accelerated its pace of opening-up in the financial sector.

During the 2016 Chengdu Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair in June, Chengdu established its first government investment fund — the Chengdu Qianhai Industrial Investment Fund — with an investment of 40 billion yuan for the first phase.

"The establishment of the fund accelerated the globalization of the city's financial industry. It has opened a channel for global investment from cities such as London, New York and Frankfurt to Chengdu," said a spokesman from the Chengdu Financial Office.

The Chengdu Financial City, established in 2009 and covering a total area of five square kilometers in the

south of the city, is the major industrial area in which Chengdu can develop its financial industry.

It had attracted 302 financial companies by the end of last year.

The city is also building the Tianfu International Fund Town, which to date has attracted a total of 10 foreign and domestic venture capital institutions. It will have the capacity to accommodate 1,200 such firms when completed in the near future.

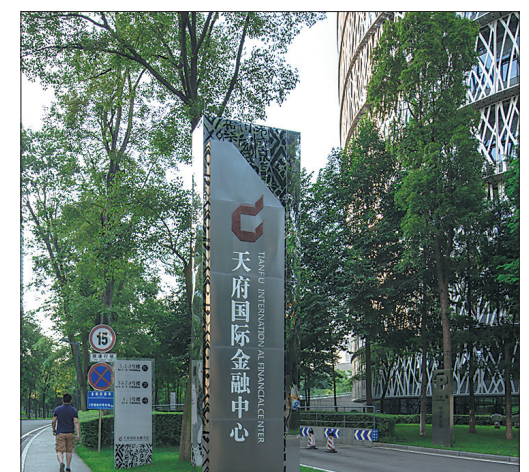
"Chengdu has accelerated its pace of internationalization since the 2013 Chengdu Fortune Global Forum and has attracted increasing global attention," Yan said.

The city was the first in central and western China to host the Fortune Global Forum.

More than 600 business leaders from top companies around the world gathered to share their opinions on new trends in the world's largest developing economy.

"The G20 meeting provides the city with new opportunities to be further known by the world. The city will gain greater international influence and become more attractive to global capital," Yan added.

Contact the writers at liyu@chinadaily.com.cn and pengchao@chinadaily.com.cn



The Tianfu International Financial Center is a landmark building in Chengdu.