

Forum intensifies intl exchanges

International events flock to the city known for its open business

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Having already forged extensive and amicable international ties, the southern China gateway metropolis of Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is wooing organizers of top international events to consolidate its position as a major center for international exchanges in the world.

Its endeavors in the past couple of years have made admirable headway.

The city has held 30-odd international conferences and events in the past couple of years, as well as new ones, including the Bustoutiness Roundtable to be co-organized with the World Economic Forum in November and the World Route Development Forum jointly organized with UK-based UBM plc in 2018.

In addition, the city has this year won the heart of the Fortune Global Forum in Guangzhou late next year.

Guangzhou Deputy-Mayor Cai Chaolin deemed Time Inc's decision to host the event in Guangzhou a recognition of the city's economic and social development, as well as an expectation of its promising prospects.

He said that Guangzhou has vowed to improve its urban and business environment, to focus on an innovation-driven economy, to establish a high-level, open economic system and to turn the city into a major center for international exchanges.

The foreseeable target is to become a preferred destination for top international events, as well as for international tourism and cultural exchanges.

The city will at the same time seek to set up sister relations with more cities and launch representative offices abroad for further expansion of international friendship, the vice-mayor said.

Analysts said that Guangzhou has already done a good job in the field and has laid a solid foundation for an international exchange center, in terms of both infrastructure and expertise. They added that what will really arouse interest in the city are globally influential events such as the Fortune Global Forum, the Davos Forum and the G20 Summit.

"Hosting international heavyweights like the Fortune Global Forum means that global organizers feel positively about Guangzhou's overall capabilities, and marks a big step forward for Guangzhou on its way towards being one of the world's first-tier cities," said Lin Jiang, deputy director of the Hong Kong, Macao and Pearl River Delta Research Center at Guangzhou-based Sun Yat-sen University.

They will help the city get easier access to premium



Government officials and their business partners mark the launch of the preparatory work for the Fortune Global Forum scheduled for next year in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Guangzhou has hosted more than 30 international meetings over the past two years.

resources, running the gamut of capital, human resources, technologies, business models and information and management ideas globally, while enabling Guangzhou to identify its disadvantages, improve on its weaknesses and change the city for the better, Lin added.

220 countries, regions

have economic and trade relationships with Guangzhou

"As a center of international trade for many centuries, Guangzhou is both a renowned symbol and a modern manifestation of China's participation in global commerce," said Alan Murray, chief content officer of Time and editor in chief of Fortune.

"Guangzhou's reputation is well known as a business-friendly city, one that has established economic and trade relationships with more than 200 countries and regions on five continents," he added.

He said Guangzhou's infrastructure, urban image and the expertise of the team in charge

of the press conference and the roundtable in mid-September are "better than expected".

He added that the team is optimistic that there will be another successful and special forum in China in 2017.

Being China's only city that has never closed its door to the outside world, Guangzhou has hosted the China Import and Export Fair, more commonly known as the Canton Fair, the largest trade fair in China, since 1957. Its history of holding international conventions began with an Asia Pacific city summit in 1996.

Its exhibition industry ranked second in terms of comprehensive development in 2015 nationwide, according to a national industrial ranking released by the Ministry of Commerce.

Data from the International Congress and Convention Association shows that the number of international conferences ranked the city fourth in China, despite growing challenges from other big cities in recent years.

The city has seen an unprecedentedly busy calendar in the past two years, with more than 30 international meetings, a document from the municipal foreign affairs office showed.

Multinational companies drawn to knowledge center

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This year has seen major investment projects funded by Fortune Global 500 companies in Guangzhou, such as Cisco (Guangzhou) Smart City, the southern headquarters of China Railway Construction Corp Ltd and COSCO Shipping Bulk Co Ltd.

The Cisco project, signed in April, will also serve as Cisco's head office of innovation center in China. Focusing on innovation related to the internet of things, and working with global partners, the project is expected to generate 100 billion yuan (\$15 billion) in annual output.

"Guangzhou is an important central city in the country, an international business and trade center, as well as a comprehensive transportation hub, with tremendous advantages in research and development, technology, innovation, service, human resource, markets, logistics, and transportation," said Cisco CEO Chuck Robbins.

The city and Cisco will "work together to build the Cisco (Guangzhou) Smart City project, striving to become a pilot city for China Manufacturing 2025, a national manufacturing innovation center, and a national pilot zone where smart manufacturing and smart service are closely combined together", Robbins said.

COSCO's new company in Guangzhou, forming the world's largest bulk vessel fleet in terms of both ship numbers



Canton Fair, a biannual trade event in Guangzhou, has established a reputation for promoting imports and exports.

and deadweight tonnage, will be able to ship iron ore, coal, grain and other commodities to more than 1,000 ports in some 100 countries and regions.

The southern headquarters of China Railway Construction Corp will incorporate functions such as international settlement, manufacturing and professional services.

The combined annual revenue of the subsidiaries of China Railway Construction Corp to be located in Nansha district in Guangzhou, is estimated at 100 billion yuan, said Gao Hong, assistant general manager of China Railway Construction Nansha Investment Development Co.

The group's foreign trade will benefit from Nansha's advantageous location, free trade zone policies and bonded port policies, Gao said, adding "we hope to build a logistics base for going global".

Jaime FlorCruz, China chairman, Fortune Global Forum, said: "Over the years, Guangzhou's image has been as a manufacturing center of the

world, producing cheap products that are sold all over the world, but in fact Guangzhou has moved on beyond that."

"We want to capture that and to tell the story of the new Guangzhou."

He said the city's knowledge and university capability is one of the factors driving the selection of Guangzhou as the host city of the Fortune Global Forum next year.

"The strength of universities that are here is in the interests of multinational companies that tap into the brainpower of the people all over the world, with recent examples being Cisco and General Electric," FlorCruz said. "All of the things Guangzhou has been doing recently have continued to increase its attractiveness as a place for multinationals to invest."

A total of 288 of the world's top 500 firms had invested in Guangzhou by June, said Cai Chaolin, vice-mayor of Guangzhou. Forbes magazine has ranked it as the best business city on the Chinese mainland five times in the past six years.

Guangzhou in brief



Two-thirds of universities in Guangdong are located in Guangzhou. In 2015, **six Nobel prize-winners** and **77 academicians** from the Chinese academies of engineering and sciences worked in the city.

Some **2.88 million** people in the city have a college diploma or higher degrees.

Economy

1.81 trillion yuan

GDP in 2015

793.3 billion yuan

Consumer goods retail sales in 2015

830.6 billion yuan

Foreign trade in 2015

Investment

The city attracted foreign investment of **\$5.4 billion** and invested **\$5.1 billion abroad** last year. It topped the list of China's best cities for business **five times** over the past six years, according to Forbes magazine.

Of the Fortune Global 500 companies, 288 have launched **797 projects** in Guangzhou as of June.



Guangzhou has 10 pillar industries, including **automobile manufacturing, fine chemical engineering, IT, modern logistics and new energy**. The added value of its service sector accounted for **66.8 percent** of its GDP.

Port

The Guangzhou port has **105 container liner routes**. In 2015, it handled **17.62 million TEUs**, with a yearly cargo throughput of **521 million metric tons**, ranking **seventh** and **sixth** respectively among ports in the world.



Airport

One of three major airline hubs in China, the city's Baiyun International Airport served **55.21 million** passengers in 2015, ranking third among airports in the country. It also handled **1.54 million tons** of cargo.



Information hub

The city is also a key information hub through which **58 percent** of China's internet is linked to the international internet.



Environment

The city experienced **312 days** of standard air quality readings in 2015. There are nine international schools and a range of international medical institutions, restaurants and religious venues.

Relations

Guangzhou has established friendly relations with **63 cities** around the world and more than **120** regional and international NGOs or friendship institutions. A total of **55 countries** have set up consulates general in the city.