

Shanghai moves to be top expat destination

Japanese Hirasawa Jun swiped his ID to check in at the high-speed rail terminal in Shanghai and got on the train swimmingly.

Having lived in Shanghai since 2014, Hirasawa was the first foreign expat in Lujiazui, part of Shanghai's CBD, to get the new-generation permanent resident permit in September, which looks and functions just like Chinese ID card.

"I can use it for checking in at railway stations and airports through channels for Chinese residents," said the director of Marubeni (Shanghai) Corp.

To help Shanghai become an international destination for science and technology, the Ministry of Public Security has allowed Shanghai to pilot a simplified procedure for granting expats permanent residence permits.

Foreigners can apply for the permit from the Shanghai Zhangjiang National Innovation Demonstration Zone or the administration committee of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone.

Senior executives of multinational companies like Hirasawa can enjoy swift processing, which previously took two years, in less than two months, said Xu Dejie, an official with the Oracle Bay, an HR consultancy in Lujiazui.

In addition to the permit service for the business elite, Shanghai has over 1,000 business incubators, which provide services for some 200,000 domestic and foreign entrepreneurs.

The Australian Trade and Investment Commission based its business incubator in XNode, a startup accelerator in downtown Shanghai. Daniel Zhan, the commission's Landing Pad project manager, said it assisted Australian companies access the Chinese market.

Australian start-ups are keen to explore China's health, AI, Web of Things, education, science and finance markets, said Zhan.

Half of the start-up businesses served by XNode are from overseas, said founder Zhou Wei.

"XNode has helped aspiring entrepreneurs from 24 countries and regions since it opened in 2015," he said. It has also sourced 30 million U.S. dollars of start-up funding.

Another business incubator Histrong specializes in returned overseas Chinese talent.

"From medical and social insurance to fund sourcing, Histrong gives overseas

Chinese entrepreneurs a sense of security of doing business in China,” said Zhu Zhenrong who, after living in the U.S. for over 20 years, set up Shanghai Sanoviv Biological Technology Co. Ltd. in June with Histrong’s help.

Chinese American Robin Young has lived in Shanghai since 2005. He set up AI firm Seedlink in 2013 to help companies in HR management.

“It’s all possible because we started in China. China is growing and has open policies for immigration,” Young said.