Computing a Path to Success

Dialogue

By GONG Qian

Computer scientist Thomas Weise remembers the time 13 years ago when his family and friends did not think that his decision to move to China was a good idea. But Dr. Weise's mind was made up as he wanted to spend some time abroad to grow as a person: face new challenges, learn new points of view, and get some experience beyond his research field. China seemed like the perfect place for these ambitions.

"China was always interesting to me. It is a country with a very different way of life," the 42-year-old German told *Science and Technology Daily*. On his arrival at his new home, Weise began his two-year work as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC) in Hefei, Anhui province, after completing his PhD in Computer Science in Germany in 2009. He joined Professor Yao Xin's team, which is well-known for its expertise in evolutionary computing.

Initially, Weise was anxious about working and living in China. But he found himself warmly welcomed and kindly received by all the people he came into contact with. "I immediately liked the work environment in Hefei. I felt deep respect for my colleagues, who were really outstanding researchers and from whom I could learn a lot," said Weise, adding that, "The PhD, MSc and BSc students here all were hard-working, kind and really smart."

German computer scientist Thomas Weise reads Science and Technology Daily English Edition. (PHOTO: Gong Qian/S&T Daily)

Two years later in 2011, Weise became an associate professor of the USTC-Birmingham Joint Research Institute (UBRI) in Intelligent Computation and Its Applications. "I really enjoyed working there as I had learned to do my job there sufficiently well," he said.

Weise went on to embrace a big chance to build a research group from scratch at Hefei University. This meant to him not only a new challenges, but also a next career level move - to become full professor and team leader. From 2016, he has been the director of the Institute of Applied Optimization of the School of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data at Hefei University.

After living and working in China for well over a decade, Weise believes that China's research environment is very dynamic and competitive. The country also offers good sources for funding, both for basic and applied sciences, he said.

Meanwhile, he describes the country's research environment as highly professional, saying that China has clearly defined performance metrics, funding sources with fixed deadlines, and a clear ranking of universities, journals and conferences, which allows for a fair assessment of researchers in China. "I like this," said Weise.

But it also meant that he needed to adapt to the academic performance metrics, which are very different from those in his home country. "While I honestly was a good PhD student in Germany, it took some time to become an acceptable researcher in China," said Weise.

Currently, he is working on a new optimization technique which has theoretical/mathematical properties that no other technique has. According to him, this work is now gaining traction. In April, a research group from the Netherlands went through the process to basically re-implement algorithms produced by Dr. Weise's team and ran a lot of experiments, just to see if the team's findings were accurate. "They confirmed our results exactly," said Weise.

Previously in 2020, Weise received the Friendship Award from the Hefei government for his outstanding contributions to local sci-tech development and China-Germany cooperation.

"I want to spend the rest of career and the rest of my life here in Hefei," said Weise. His team currently has nine members who are all researchers with PhD. "We are still growing. My goal is that we eventually become a good research group, and we can make good contributions to our society and earn a good reputation, both at home and abroad," he added.

Expats Activity

Special Class Sparks Passion for Science

By WANG Xin & LONG Yun

As a prelude to the National Science and Technology Week 2023, the themed activity "Foreign Expert Science Class" was held on May 13 and 14, attracting over 260 on-site attendees.

Professor Katsumi Tanigaki, a chief scientist at the Beijing Institute of Quantum Information Science, delivered an enlightening lecture titled "Emerging Quantum Information Science and Technology in Physics." With expertise in the field, the Japanese scientist elaborated on the origins, applications, development, and future prospects of quantum information, which combines quantum physics and information technology as an interdisciplinary study.

Professor Frederic Genty makes his speech during the event. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Professor Frederic Genty, the dean of the Sino-French Institute of Engineering and Technology at Beihang University, provided a valuable insight into the world of engineering with the lecture titled "Exploring the Role and Contributions of Engineers."

Drawing inspiration from Gustave Eiffel, the creator of the Eiffel Tower, Genty shed light on the vital role played by engineers and inventors across various industries. He highlighted their contributions to spheres such as aviation and deep-sea submersibles, particularly during the second and third industrial revolutions. His lecture emphasized how engineers consistently push the boundaries in their own fields, creating significant value and benefiting humanity at large.

The event was filled with vibrant and frequent interactions between the lecturers and the audience. The experts' engaging explanations ignited curiosity and a genuine thirst for knowledge among the attendees. Additionally, the experts encouraged young individuals to develop practical skills, enhance their scientific literacy, and cultivate an innovative mindset.

Professor Katsumi Tanigaki delivers his speech during the event. (COURTESY PHOTO)

The themed activities have successfully organized nearly 60 lectures and have gathered foreign experts from over 20 countries, covering diverse fields such as chemistry, physics, aviation, engineering, materials and other sectors. They have received praise from all sectors of society for their valuable contributions to science and knowledge dissemination.

This article is also contributed by Foreign Talent Research Center, MOST.

Embracing Diversity, Enhancing Understanding

By Eva Yin

For the 13th year, a festival aimed at strengthening cultural exchanges between Chinese and international students, while also creating a friendly platform for mutual respect, understanding, and inclusiveness, known as the International Cultural Festival of Tianjin University(TJU), kicked off on its Weijin Road campus on May 13.

Themed "Diversified TJU, Harmony and Development," the festival consists of three major parts, namely artistic performances, a food court, and a cultural exhibition. More than a thousand students gathered to enjoy the cultural feast.

As the event commenced, Malaysian students studying at TJU took the stage and presented an energetic and captivating performance of their intangible cultural heritage known as the Twenty-Four Festive Drums. The drummers, with their movements, created a powerful and rhythmic sound that resonated with the enthusiastic audience.

The foreign students gather at the International Cultural Festival of TJU. (PHOTO: TJU)

It was also a brand new experience for Nicole Kueh Shian Maun, a Malaysian student majoring in environmental engineering at TJU and one of the performing drummers. "We are very grateful to the university for providing such a good opportunity for us to tell our Chinese peers what our country is like. And we are glad to learn about many other cultures and get to know many friends," she said.

The International Cultural Festival is not only a celebration of diversity but also an opportunity for students to broaden their horizons and learn from each other. The festival provides a platform for students to showcase their talents, share their cultural traditions, and create lasting connections. It also encourages dialogue and interaction, fostering a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

This article is contributed by TJU.

Service Info

Minhang Opens Expats Service Center

By Staff Reporters

More than 30 international experts from over 10 enterprises rooted in Minhang district, Shanghai, gathered at a foreign talent salon event, witnessing the establishment of Minhang's first Foreign Talent Service Center.

Innovation is the driving force, and talent is the primary resource. The Foreign Talent Service Center will conduct a series of activities to deliver detailed and accurate policy interpretation for foreign experts living in China, striving to build an exchange platform and provide efficient, convenient, and high-quality services for them.

During the salon, a policy interpretation session was held to help enterprises and experts understand policies and conduct business conveniently. Relevant departments explained the policies related to foreign employment permits and other relevant requirements. Attendees expressed their appreciation for this targeted policy interpretation, applauding its rich and practical content.

Furthermore, the interactive and communicative functions of the center were also highlighted. International experts showed a strong interest in Chinese traditional culture through experiencing traditional handicraft activities, gaining a more intuitive understanding of folk handicrafts, and appreciating the enduring charm of Chinese culture.

The establishment of the center in Minhang district marks a significant step towards attracting and supporting foreign experts in Shanghai. With its commitment to innovation and the provision of quality services, the center will create a dynamic platform for exchange and cooperation, fostering the growth and development of foreign experts in the region.

Qingyuan Optimizes Foreign Affairs Service

By Staff Reporters

Qingyuan city, Guangdong province, witnessed the establishment of its first industrial park Foreign Affairs Service Station (FASS) on May 12. This move has been welcomed by local enterprises as they are allowed to handle foreign-related affairs right on their doorstep. One business owner expressed delight after submitting the application materials for an APEC business card, saying, "It's great to have this foreign affairs service station. We can now handle foreign-related matters without leaving the industrial park."

The tasks of FASS in the industrial park include promoting overseas processing of APEC business cards, providing consultations on foreign policies and laws, and utilizing this platform to connect various resources in order to serve the industrial park and foreign-related enterprises. This initiative aims to further optimize the investment and business environment in Qingyuan.

After the unveiling ceremony, relevant departments and institutions gave detailed introductions about the policies that affected various enterprises. "This year, our company is vigorously expanding its market and securing orders. The information and policy shared in this presentation were like a timely rainfall for us," said a business owner.

And before that on May 10, to fully serve the city's high-quality economic and social development, the Foreign Affairs Office of Qingyuan Municipal Government established another FASS in a community where there is a concentration of foreign residents. The effectiveness of each FASS will be evaluated, and the model is expected to be gradually rolled out to other places as required.

To Know About Iodine Deficiency

Science Outreach

By Staff Reporters

Since the introduction of salt iodisation in China to prevent and control iodine deficiency disorders, serious diseases such as cretinism and endemic goiter caused by iodine deficiency have become relatively rare. However, as the incidence of thyroid nodules has gradually increased in recent years, some people began to question the existing iodisation control measures.

To clarify some pertinent concerns, Liu Peng and Fan Lijun from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention address people's concerns about iodine deficiency and its treatment.

What are the health consequences of iodine deficiency?

The effects of iodine deficiency at different stages of life are different. To foetuses and infants, it can interfere with their normal brain development, resulting in severe cases of cretinism, deafness and mental retardation; to children and adolescents, it can affect their intellectual and physical development, causing motor, visual and auditory impairment and most importantly, goiter; as a result, adults can suffer from goiter and hypothyroidism.

How to treat iodine deficiency?

Treatment for iodine deficiency usually involves increasing your iodine intake. In some parts of the world, many people don't get enough iodine because the natural environment, such as regions away from the sea and at higher altitudes, contains very little iodine, and the human body has a limited ability to store iodine. Therefore, the people with iodine deficiency should be corrected on a long-term, daily basis, such as eating an iodine-rich diet and iodized salt, taking iodine-containing supplements, among which iodized salt is the safest and most effective measure recommended by the World Health Organization to control iodine deficiency disorders.

Do people suffering from thyroid disease need iodine supplements?

People with an overactive thyroid should avoid eating excessive amounts of iodine-rich foods and medicines. If radioactive iodine is used to treat hyperthyroidism, iodine-rich foods such as seaweed should be avoided for at least 7 days. Patients with hypothyroidism who have had their thyroid gland removed or who have residual thyroid tissue may be able to follow a normal iodine diet.

It is important to note that thyroid disorders are caused by different factors and pathogenesis, and that the need for iodine supplementation in patients with different thyroid disorders is subject to medical advice.