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# Science

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# HONG KONG IN FOCUS: Asia's Research Hub



Positioned at the crossroads of Asia and the West, both geographically and culturally, Hong Kong is taking advantage of its auspicious place in Asia by reimagining itself not just as a financial and tourism center, but also as a research and biotechnology hub. This sponsored feature will provide the reader with an update on the state of scientific research in the region and a glimpse into the powerful engine that is driving progress there, from basic research to the commercialization of therapeutics and medical devices.

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## Innovation and Technology Commission [www.itc.gov.hk](http://www.itc.gov.hk)

The Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) was set up in 2000 to enhance Hong Kong's innovation and technology capability as an impetus for economic growth by supporting applied research and development, and technology transfer and application, providing technological infrastructure, and nurturing the development of human capital.

"Our basic policy is to create an ecosystem within which the innovation and technology sector can survive and flourish," explains Miss Wong.

The attraction of Hong Kong according to Miss Wong are its geographical location in Asia, the use of the common law system, the simple and affordable tax system, a clean government, and credible IP protection. Additionally, the region has universities that persistently rank among the top 50 in the world.

Importantly, the living environment of Hong Kong in terms of language, mobility, convenience, and familiarity has created a culture attractive to people from all over the world. "It is a good place for foreigners to connect with businesses in the mainland and Asia," says Miss Wong. "For big

Chinese companies, Hong Kong is a good place to work towards the international market. We are really right in the heart of Asia."

Despite this, biotech in Hong Kong is a relatively young technology sector. However, health care-related companies, such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, and traditional Chinese medicine, are growing. "Modernization of traditional Chinese Medicine [TCM] is increasingly showing huge potential and provides the perfect East-West integration that is crucial for Hong Kong's portfolio," adds Miss Wong.

"For biotech, proximity to the mainland provides oppor-

tunities. Although Hong Kong is relatively small, it shouldn't be considered in isolation," states Miss Wong. Hong Kong is partnered with 12 of the 280 State Key Laboratories in the mainland China (with more to come), 10 of which have a biotech-related research focus. ITC, in collaboration with the Research Grants Council, ensures that these laboratories meet international standards with regards to infrastructure, workforce, and research focus.

Miss Wong expects biotech in Hong Kong to flourish and develop in the future. "We are certain that more international partners, including academics and companies, will join us in the future," she says.

"Our basic policy is to create an ecosystem within which the innovation and technology sector can survive and flourish."

**-Miss Janet Wing-Chen Wong**

## Hong Kong Biotechnology Organization [www.hkbio.org.hk](http://www.hkbio.org.hk)

Hong Kong Biotechnology Organization (HKBIO), a charitable biotech industry organization, was established with the objectives of advancing and accelerating Hong Kong's biotech industry growth by promoting study, research, education, and exchanges in the biotech sector in Hong Kong. "Building an industry requires concerted effort from government, academia, and industry," explains Professor Yu. "We want to show the international community that Hong Kong is fully committed to building and growing this industry and that our government, academia, and industry are all taking proactive roles in contributing to biotech."

"We want to show the international community that Hong Kong is fully committed to building and growing this [biotech] industry."

**-Professor Albert Cheung-Hoi Yu**

the Taiwan Bio Industry Organization and AusBiotech, and the various delegations to build global platforms for industry.

"In general it is hard to attract funding specific for the biotech industry, so part of HKBIO's mission is to bring in venture capitalists and other funding agents to our industry, so that they will have opportunities to match each other's needs and resources," says Professor Wendy Wen-Luan Hsiao, HKBIO treasurer.

"One of the initiatives is to assist our industry to explore the China market. Hong Kong is the gateway to China," says Professor Yuk-Lam Lo, HKBIO honorary chairman. "It is very easy for us to go into China to do business and utilize the resources, including talent, financial grants, and the future market," adds Professor Yu. "In China, the demand for medical care, medical diagnosis, and treatments will be huge. The market in America is already saturated, but in China, you cannot calculate how much it might be worth."



L to R: AusBiotech COO Glenn Cross, Professor Albert Cheung-Hoi Yu, Professor Wendy Wen-Luan Hsiao, and Dr. Bernard Pak-Li Chan at the HKBIO-AusBiotech MOU signing ceremony