

AstraZeneca to form 1st Health Innovation Hub in Malaysia



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The hub is aimed at spurring the country's R&D, commercialisation and innovation activities in science, tech and innovation sectors

By LYDIA NATHAN / pic by BLOOMBERG

BIOPHARMACEUTICAL company AstraZeneca Sdn Bhd (AstraZeneca Malaysia) partnered Sunway University to establish the first Health Innovation Hub (HIH) in Malaysia, as part of AstraZeneca's A Catalyst Network, which consists of more than 20 hubs across the globe.

The Malaysian hub is the 10th launched in emerging markets, following the establishment of the first HIH in Russia in 2018, Brazil, Argentina, India, Singapore, Gulf Cooperation Council countries, mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.



Facilitated by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti), the new hub will be part of the Malaysia Grand Challenge which is aimed at spurring Malaysia's research and development (R&D), commercialisation and innovation activities in the quest to prioritise science, technology and innovation to turn the country into a high-tech nation.

Mosti Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar said the hub will work to drive policy and shape the ecosystem, as well as to assist the commercialisation and expansion of healthcare solutions across the country.

"The Malaysian government is committed to investing in science, technology and innovation ecosystems because we have seen the necessity in strengthening our domestic capabilities in the face of this great global inequity.

"With breakthroughs via this ecosystem, we can level the playing field and ensure health sovereignty in the years to come," he said at the launch of the hub in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Khairy added that he would like to see more public and private partnerships of this nature, as the pandemic has highlighted the importance of science, technology and innovation.

"AstraZeneca plc was at the forefront of the creation of vaccines for the Covid-19 virus. It also makes up a big part of the Covax (Covid-19 vaccines global access) vaccine supply," he said.

AstraZeneca Malaysia country president Dr Sanjeev Kumar Panchal said the hub will function by powering local start-ups and innovators to deliver solutions to bolster the treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), as well as to support patient experience.

The start-ups will have access to the hub at Sunway iLabs as a testbed and resources across Sunway Bhd's ecosystem of 13 business divisions.

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"As a biopharmaceutical company, we have a vital role to play in supporting Malaysia's battle against NCDs by strengthening our primary care ecosystem with solutions beyond the pill.

"With a robust ecosystem in place, we can address the prevalence of NCDs, better support patient experience and enable digital health innovation," he said.

According to Sanjeev, AstraZeneca Malaysia will focus on creating partnerships with local healthcare innovators while providing tools and a platform to build sustainable ecosystems and further drive digital health innovation.

"The use of technology has shown to get patients engaged and be more proactive when it comes to their own health. Digital tools such as sensors, wearable devices and apps allow people to monitor their health, engage with healthcare practitioners and share data more easily.

"This further empowers patients and opens up a new world of integrated healthcare, in which AstraZeneca has an important role to play," he said.

Sunway iLabs chief innovation officer and director Matt Van Leeuwen said the joint initiative is also aligned with Sunway iLabs' vision to become Asean's leading integrated innovation platform that inspires people to design, test and launch sustainable solutions for a better future.

Meanwhile, Khairy said the report by the European Medicines Agency relating to rare blood clots being a possible side effect of the AstraZeneca vaccine has been taken into consideration as Malaysia continues with the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme.

He added that Malaysia's Special Committee on Covid-19 Vaccine Supply Access Guarantee will decide if the country will go along with its usage for citizens as previously planned.





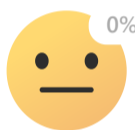
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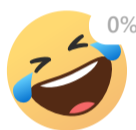
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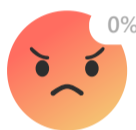
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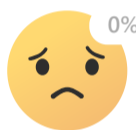
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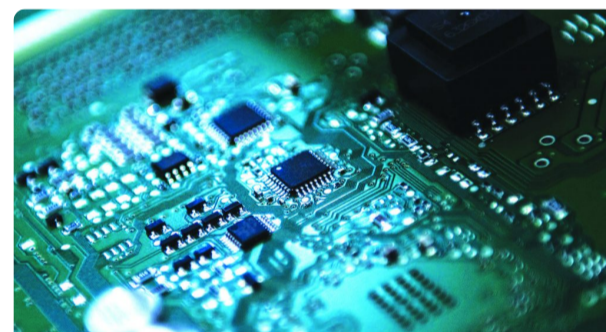
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