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ASIA EDITION

“Across AMEA, the biopharma industry is seeing a greater emphasis on local production and supply chain resilience”

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Avantor, the leading global provider of life sciences and advanced technology solutions, inaugurated Singapore Manufacturing & Distributing Hub (SMDH) mid this year. The expansion of existing Singapore Hub added new cGMP manufacturing suites, quality control laboratory and inventory management expertise for process ingredients and excipients. The hub's three state-of-the-art facilities allow the hub to drive innovation and efficiency to address the immediate challenges in Asia, Middle East and Africa (AMEA) biopharma industry while addressing biopharmaceutical, biologic, cell, and gene therapy challenges. In a conversation with BioSpectrum Asia, Christophe Couturier, Executive Vice President, AMEA, Avantor explains how the company bolsters its regional capability to advance therapeutic science by launching the Singapore Manufacturing and Distribution Hub.

How is Avantor strategising to strengthen supply chain resilience and competitiveness in the AMEA biomedical sphere?

With rapid advancements in the biopharmaceuticals space, having robust and agile supply chains are crucial in enabling scientific breakthroughs. This includes timely access to critical raw materials, consumables, instruments, as well as ensuring stringent manufacturing processes and transportation to uphold the highest standards of quality. Bolstering regional supply chains is essential for biopharma and is key to mitigating uncertainties such as geopolitical concerns and natural disasters.

Keeping high-quality standards through rigorous testing processes is our top priority at Avantor as our partners navigate these uncertainties. In addition to sourcing and testing raw materials, we conduct in-process testing of production processes, as well as product testing at each stage of the scientific journey.

To expand our operations and support business needs of partners in the region, our new SMDH integrates an existing distribution hub with cGMP manufacturing capabilities to create a one-stop facility for the AMEA region. Its strategic location brings Avantor's solutions closer to our regional partners, maximising their supply chain capabilities and efficiencies.

What are the objectives of the new SMDH facilities designed to drive innovation and efficiency in the pharmaceutical sector?

Projected to reach $64.9 billion by 2027, Asia Pacific's biopharma industry is on a growth trajectory. At the heart of this, our SMDH is established strategically in Singapore to foster innovation by serving the business continuity needs of our partners here and across the AMEA region.

To bolster innovation, we recognise the need to support our biopharma partners through expanded capacities and capabilities, stringent quality control and shorter lead times. The new SMDH will include two cGMP Class 8 suites with subdividing and packaging capabilities, two warehouses with 11,000 pallet positions, one of which will be cGMP compliant warehouse, and a fully equipped cGMP Quality Control Lab for testing. Our cGMP and ISO 9001 certified warehouses operate with the same Avantor global quality and regulatory standards. We also have a team of in-house experts that offer customised expertise and solutions to the requirements of our partners without compromising on quality.

The hub also enhances supply chain efficiencies by ensuring shorter lead times and access to critical raw materials to support research and development in the region. It adds to our existing network of global distribution and manufacturing hubs to provide our partners with essential products and services to advance scientific breakthroughs in the biopharma ecosystem.

Recognising the importance of collaboration in fostering innovation in the biopharma industry, the SMDH also facilitates engagement with regional and local stakeholders, including research institutions and government agencies, to drive innovation and advancements in AMEA. Through strategic partnerships and knowledge sharing, Avantor aims to contribute to the development of scientific breakthroughs, and a thriving biopharma ecosystem.

How is Avantor adapting to the growing complexities and requirements surrounding regulatory standards across AMEA's biopharma sector?

Life sciences and biopharma are some of the most heavily regulated industries worldwide. Regulatory standards are informed by several dynamic factors, including advancements in new technologies, as well as improvements in patient outcomes and safety.

To navigate the evolving regulatory landscape, Avantor upholds high quality and safety standards. We adhere to stringent quality control throughout our manufacturing and distribution processes, and this is evident in our new SMDH, which features state-of-the-art facilities (cGMP Class 8 Suites, Quality Control Lab, ISO 9001 certified warehouse) that uphold these standards. Additionally, we have robust quality management systems and conduct regular audits to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

We operate more than 200 manufacturing, distribution and sales centres in over 30 countries. With a team of in-house experts stationed in each facility, partners can be assured that regulatory standards are met without compromising on quality. Our mission is to advance life-changing science, providing backbone support for the biopharma industry across AMEA to address the growing healthcare needs of the region.

How do you foresee the trends and opportunities in AMEA biopharmaceutical manufacturing in the current competitive dynamic?

Across AMEA, the biopharma industry is seeing a rise in demand for personalised medicine, advancements in gene therapies, increased focus on bioprocessing, and a greater emphasis on local production and supply chain resilience. Considering this, biopharma manufacturers are working to meet these growing needs by accelerating drug discovery, research, and delivery. Moreover, the need to reduce reliance on global supply chains for raw materials due to geopolitical risks continues to place significant pressure on AMEA's biopharma ecosystem.

As a global provider of mission-critical products and services, this is where Avantor comes into play. Our SMDH boosts AMEA's supply chain resiliency and efficiency by ensuring a consistent supply of critical raw materials needed for mission-critical drug research and development. Designed to bring innovative solutions closer to our partners in AMEA, the hub fosters a self-sufficient chemical manufacturing ecosystem to cater to their evolving needs. With added manufacturing capabilities, the SMDH helps to facilitate quicker turnaround times with local capacities.

Our new SMDH signifies our ongoing commitment to serving as a key biopharma stakeholder in Singapore. By bringing our services closer to our AMEA partners, we are enhancing the supply of critical materials and services required by biopharma manufacturers in Singapore and across the region, as well as strengthening supply chain resilience for businesses to promote growth in the ecosystem. This strategic move is aligned with Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB's) vision to enhance the competitiveness of Singapore's biopharma industry, an integral part of Singapore's manufacturing sector.

How crucial is having cGMP-compliant warehouses for managing real-time inventory movements to aid in global distribution? What impact will an integrated distribution network have on access to key biopharma raw ingredients?

Our cGMP-compliant warehouses manage real-time inventory movements and are supported by our network of multiple geographic locations. The cGMP compliant warehouses uphold stringent quality control standards and provide seamless tracking, traceability, and quality assurance. This helps instil confidence among partners in the integrity of products and supplies, such as high-quality cGMP grade process chemicals and excipients.

For example, our cGMP-compliant warehouse in the SMDH provides extended chemical manufacturing capabilities, expanded storage systems, and a world-class Quality Control Lab. By adhering to strict protocols, the warehouses help to mitigate the risk of product deformity, product loss or regulatory non-compliance, which can lead to delays, financial losses, and compromised products.

The integration of a distribution network with cGMP-compliant facilities has a profound impact on the accessibility of high-quality key biopharma raw ingredients. It streamlines the movement of essential products enabling quicker turnaround times and expediting access to essential raw materials crucial for drug discovery, research, and delivery. The integrated network enhances chemical manufacturing capabilities and bolsters supply chain resiliency and efficiency, which contributes to the advancement of biopharma.

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