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ASIA EDITION

BIO Asia Taiwan 2025 spurs Asia's burgeoning biotechnology potential towards growth and innovation

July 24, 2025 | News | By Hithaishi C Bhaskar

Next Wave of Biotech Opportunities: Building a Global Platform for Communication and Collaboration



The BIO Asia–Taiwan 2025 convention officially kicked off on 23rd july at Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, TaiNEX 1 and 2. This year's three-day conference program features three major forums: the Innovation Forum, the Investment Summit, and the Regional Collaboration Forums. Opening remarks were delivered by Johnsee Lee, Chairman of BIO Asia–Taiwan; Liu Lee-Cheng, Chairman of the Taiwan Bio Industry Association (Taiwan BIO); and Kelly Seagraves, Vice President of National Security and International Affairs at the US-based Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO).

The opening Plenary Session One featured a distinguished lineup of speakers, including George Hara, UN ambassador, investor, and recipient of the 2024 BIO Asia Award; Claire Skentelbery, Chair of the International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA); and My Linh Kha, Senior Vice President of Amgen and head of Japan and Asia Pacific for the company. In addition, Tang Prize Laureate and discoverer of GLP-1, Jens Juul Holst, delivered the keynote Tang Prize Lecture explaining how GLP-1 has brought revolutionary breakthroughs in diabetes treatment.

Next Wave of Biotech Opportunities: Building a Global Platform for Communication and Collaboration

In his opening remarks, Johnsee Lee, Chairman of BIO Asia-Taiwan, stated that the greatest challenge facing the world in 2025 is uncertainty; whether in global trade, geopolitics, tariff policies, and the restructuring of production and supply chains. As such, this year's conference theme, Next Wave of Biotech Opportunities, highlights Asia's growing influence in the global biotech landscape. Lee expressed hope that participants will be inspired to transform today's fast-changing challenges into new opportunities.

Johnsee Lee explained that this year's conference features three parallel forums: Innovation, Investment, and Regional Collaboration. Notably, the Regional Collaboration Forum includes dedicated sessions hosted by countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Japan, and India. In addition, the BIO Asia–Taiwan Exhibition will showcase over 2,200 booths, and all attendees are warmly invited to participate.

Liu Lee-Cheng, Chairman of the Taiwan Bio Industry Association (Taiwan BIO), stated that the association has been established for 36 years and now includes over 170 corporate members and more than 4,000 individual members. Its mission is to serve as a bridge between the government and industry, foster global partnerships, and help members navigate the rapidly evolving bioeconomy. In addition to actively participating in international biotech exhibitions, Taiwan BIO has signed multiple Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with overseas biotech associations over the past 18 months.

Liu Lee-Cheng also noted that Taiwan is internationally recognized for its strengths in information technology (IT) and industrial agility. Today, its semiconductor supply chain has become a driving force for the development of the biotech sector. At the same time, Taiwan is becoming more and more proficient in the development of diagnostics, medical devices, therapies, and vaccines. Its reliable contract development and manufacturing (CDMO) services have also become an integral part of global biotech manufacturing strategies. "Importantly, biotech is no longer a solo act, but more like a symphony," said Liu.

Kelly Seagraves, Vice President of National Security and International Affairs at BIO, extended her best wishes to the gathering. "Biotech is not just growing, it is booming, particularly here in Taiwan," she stated, adding that Taiwan is poised to play a central role in the next wave of biotech development. She emphasized that the advancement of biotechnology depends on global collaboration: supporting early-stage research, securing necessary funding, and enhancing the resilience of supply chains.

Seagraves also emphasized that these forums are more than just speeches, they are dialogue platforms that help all participants stay informed on the latest developments. She expressed hope that while the industry pursues biotech innovation, it will also prioritize making therapies accessible to patients around the world as quickly as possible. Biotechnology, she noted, represents not only opportunity, but also a responsibility.

2024 BIO Asia Award Winner George Hara Calls for Greater Attention to Wealth Inequality

Due to last year's typhoon restricting travel to Taiwan, Johnsee Lee finally got to present the 2024 BIO Asia Award to Japan's George Hara, UN ambassador and impact investor. As a keynote speaker at BIO Asia–Taiwan 2025, Hara delivered a talk entitled "To Build a Well-educated, Healthy Middle Class by Establishing Technology Industry" where he discussed how the biotechnology sector can drive economic growth while creating meaningful social value.

Hara pointed out that one of the most pressing global challenges today is the widening gap between rich and poor, a problem closely tied to the misuse of capitalism. In response, he advocates for what he calls “Public Interest Capitalism,” emphasizing that corporate success is not solely driven by shareholders, but by the collective contributions of employees, local communities, customers, and long-term investors.

Hara emphasized three key principles: Companies should distribute profits fairly and reasonably among all contributors; investments should encourage long-term research and development, opposing short-term speculation or a focus on quarterly reports; and after achieving success, companies should not become conservative but continue to invest in innovation and challenge new frontiers.

"You should not focus on IPO or money. You should focus on making a worthy product. Then, making money for your employees," summarized Hara, adding that profits will come if you follow these principles.

Following that, Claire Skentelbery, Chair of the ICBA and President of EuropaBio, explained ICBA’s mission to ensure that member countries can all contribute effectively to building a diverse and resilient global supply chain and collaboration network. Additionally, EuropaBio serves as a cross-sector industry association representing the European biotech sector. Beyond enhancing the competitiveness of the EU biotech industry and fostering industry cohesion, EuropaBio also advocates for regulatory frameworks that support industry growth, including pharmaceutical regulations, new plant breeding technologies, clinical trial regulations, and health technology assessments (HTA).

My Linh Kha, Senior Vice President of Amgen for Japan and the Asia Pacific, highlighted in her presentation that society is at a critical turning point where biotechnology intersects with artificial intelligence (AI), with diagnosis, treatment, and prediction of diseases becoming redefined. She also urged that as Taiwan enters a super-aged society this year and faces increasing burdens from age-related diseases, early detection of health risks and evidence-based health interventions should be regarded as investments in society. She also mentioned that Amgen currently has an AI-designed small molecule drug in Phase II clinical trials.

The Tang Prize Lecture featured Tang Prize Laureate and GLP-1 discoverer Jens Juul Holst shared his journey in discovering GLP-1 receptor agonists leading to exciting clinical applications, including today's high-profile anti-obesity treatments. He noted that the market now includes oral GLP-1 receptor agonists such as semaglutide, as well as the oral small-molecule

GLP-1 agonist Orforglipron. These treatments not only help slow the progression of diabetic kidney disease but have also demonstrated in clinical studies the potential to reduce risks of cardiovascular disease, dementia, chronic inflammation, opioid abuse, and even cancer.

Media Roundtable: Strategies for Addressing High Tariff Policies

Following the opening session, a media roundtable discussion was held featuring Johnsee Lee, Chairman of BIO Asia–Taiwan; Liu Lee-Cheng, Chairman of Taiwan BIO; 2024 BIO Asia Award winner George Hara; Kelly Seagraves, Vice President of National Security and International Affairs at BIO; and Claire Skentelbery, Chair of ICBA. They exchanged insights and shared strategies on how to navigate the current high tariff landscape.

George Hara acknowledged that achieving mutual benefit is challenging, but emphasized that ongoing communication and education remain essential. Kelly Seagraves added that, in response to the high tariffs pushed by the Trump administration, BIO is actively engaging with the U.S. government. She highlighted that especially during transitions of power, patience is needed to rebuild high-level dialogue and long-term relationships.

Claire Skentelbery pointed out that for the biotech industry, which requires long-term investment, policy uncertainty poses a greater risk than tariffs. Such uncertainty hinders companies from making long-term decisions. She emphasized that only by building stable and trusting international collaborations can these risks be mitigated and the industry's long-term development be ensured.

Plenary Session Two: Global Pharma Leaders Gather to Explore Innovative Drug Development and the Future of Healthcare

Continuing the theme of global biotech development from Session One, Session Two began with Manuel Sanz, COO of Oncomatryx Biopharma, sharing how teamwork has driven the advancement of their novel tumor quantum immunotherapy drug, OMTX705, from the laboratory to clinical trials. David Flores, co-founder and CEO of BioCentury, discussed the importance of capital efficiency and speed, highlighting that Asia's centers of excellence must collaborate across borders to achieve success.

Nick Meadows, Head of Pharma, MedTech, and Life Sciences at PwC Australia, shared insights on how genomic technologies are being practically applied. He outlined four strategies for creating differentiated positioning in the genomic bioanalytics market: value improvers, product portfolio managers, testing innovators, and research collaborators.

Rostina Yoon, Vice President of Strategy and Delivery at Syneos Health, discussed how the company leverages AI-driven predictions and insights to improve clinical trials, focusing on trial efficiency, study design, reducing patient burden, and continuously driving innovation.

Second Investment Summit Kicks Off; Taiwan Biotech Attracts International Capital Attention

In addition to the Innovation Forum, this year's BIO Asia–Taiwan held a repeat of last year's popular and successful Investment Summit. This event featured not only leading Taiwanese biotech companies but, for the first time, included overseas biotech firms to Taiwan introduced by international venture capital firms such as Illumina Ventures, Syncona, VMS Group, and Vivo Capital. The event also invited senior executives from global pharmaceutical companies to participate.

Participants included Dr. Jenny Hsiung, Head of Business Development and M&A at AbbVie; Dr. Michael Hsieh from Gilead Sciences, VP of protein therapeutics development; and Dr. Pei Shih from Novo Nordisk, head of rare disease R&D and assessment. Together, they engaged in in-depth discussions on global investment trends.

The forum was coordinated by Audrey Tseng, Executive Director of forum organizer Taiwan BIO. She noted that despite a global biotech funding winter, Taiwan has delivered impressive results. In 2024, 15 biotech companies went public (including listings on the Taiwan Exchange, the Taipei Exchange, the Emerging Stock Board, and the Innovation Board), raising a total of NT$14.55 billion (around US$68 million). In the first half of 2025, five more biotech companies completed IPOs, with more expected to join in the second half. For biotech companies seeking capital or institutional investors seeking funding or institutional investors hunting for opportunities, Taiwan has become an important stop.

Coverage by Hithaishi Bhaskar