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Japan's Astellas announces partnership with Korea Institute of Startup and Entrepreneurship Development

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First pharmaceutical company from Japan to actively support the operation of the programme



Japan-based Astellas Pharma Inc. has agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Korea Institute of Startup and Entrepreneurship Development (KISED), an umbrella organisation of the Ministry of SMEs and Startups, a Korean Government Agency, for the operation of the Partnership with Global Companies Programme, which aims to identify Korean drug-discovery startups and support their business growth and global expansion.

Under the terms of the MoU, KISED will provide overall management and research funding for the Partnership with Global Companies Programme. Astellas will provide Korean drug-discovery startups, which are selected together, with KISED with access to laboratory and office space at SakuLab-Tsukuba, located on the premises of the Astellas Tsukuba Research Center.

Startups residing in SakuLab-Tsukuba will not only receive support through consultations with Astellas experts in various fields, but will also be able to accelerate their drug discovery research by leveraging networks with fellow residents and Astellas researchers.

Through this programme, two Korean pharmaceutical and biotech startups—TCUBEiT Inc. (a next-generation T-cell-based immunotherapy developer) and AAVATAR Therapeutics (specializing in AAV viral vector engineering technology)—have been selected. They will begin full-scale collaboration by moving into SakuLa-Tsukuba.

Tadaaki Taniguchi, M.D., Ph.D., Chief Research & Development Officer (CRDO) of Astellas said, "We expect that the signing of this MoU will further strengthen and accelerate drug discovery research together with Korean startups, ultimately contributing to the creation of innovative medical solutions."

Jong-pil Yoo, President of KISED said, "This agreement will serve as a significant opportunity to accelerate the global expansion of promising Korean startups in the bio and pharmaceutical sectors through strategic collaboration with Astellas, a global pharmaceutical company. In particular, as new drug development requires a high level of expertise and infrastructure, this program—enabling startups to leverage Astellas' research assets and global network directly—is expected to provide substantial support for their growth."