

S for IT visits UK to strengthen innovation and technology ties (with photos)

The Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, paid his first duty visit to the United Kingdom (UK) to meet with senior officials and representatives from the innovation and technology sector to boost links between the two places.

At his separate meetings held in London today (June 26, London time) with the UK's Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Mr Sam Gyimah, and Minister for Investment, Mr Graham Stuart, Mr Yang deepened his understanding of the UK's industrial strategy and the Artificial Intelligence Sector Deal. Mr Yang said he looked forward to promoting British-Hong Kong collaboration in innovation and technology.

At a luncheon jointly held today by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in London and Invest Hong Kong, Mr Yang talked to key players of the UK innovation and technology sector about the latest policy initiatives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government to drive innovation and technology development as well as the blossoming start-up scene and burgeoning venture fund investments in Hong Kong.

Mr Yang highlighted Hong Kong's active participation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area development and the new 87-hectare Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park in the Lok Ma Chau Loop. "The development of the Bay Area is poised to present huge opportunities for individuals and enterprises alike. I invite British researchers, entrepreneurs and investors to come and tap the tremendous opportunities there," he said.

This was followed by a visit to the Francis Crick Institute, which is a renowned biomedical research centre in London, cum laboratory tour. The Institute has 1,300 scientists and support staff working collaboratively across disciplines.

The visit programme also covered visits to Cambridge and Oxford. On June 23, Mr Yang held a meeting with the Head of the Clinical School of the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research, Professor Patrick Maxwell. He also met with the Development Director and Fellow of Clare Hall Cambridge, Dr Marie Janson.

Whilst in Oxford on June 25, Mr Yang visited the Williams Advanced Engineering and Oxford Sciences Innovation. Williams Advanced Engineering is the technology and engineering services business of the Williams Group and it adapts technology originally developed for Formula One for other commercial applications.

Mr Yang then met with the senior management of Oxford Sciences Innovation and joined a lunchtime seminar to share with participants the conducive start-up environment in Hong Kong. Oxford Sciences Innovation is the partner of Oxford University to provide capital to and develop spin-off companies based on research from the University's Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences Division and Medical Sciences Division. Established in 2015, Oxford Sciences Innovation has set up over 50 companies to enable Oxford's world-class science to go to market.

Prior to the Hamlyn Symposium on Medical Robotics held on June 25 at Imperial College, Mr Yang met with Professor Yang Guangzhong and toured the microsurgery laboratory at the Hamlyn Centre to better understand the development of surgical robots there. Speaking at the drinks reception of the Hamlyn Symposium, Mr Yang told experts and pioneers of medical robotics that the HKSAR Government has earmarked HK\$10 billion (about GBP 950 million) to establish two world-class research clusters at the Hong Kong Science Park, one on healthcare technologies and the other on artificial intelligence and robotics technologies. He urged world-class scientific research teams to look into opportunities that Hong Kong can offer, set foot in Hong Kong and collaborate with local research teams.

During his stay in London, Mr Yang called on the Acting Chinese Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the UK, Mr Zhu Qin. He also visited Plexal, which provides co-working space, an accelerator programme and rapid prototyping equipment as well as entrepreneurship training and mentorship. Plexal sits within the Here East complex, previously the 2012 Olympics Press Centre.

At a drinks reception with members of the Hong Kong community on June 22, Mr Yang updated them on Hong Kong's latest developments in the innovation and technology arena. He told the Hong Kong community that the HKSAR Government will launch a fast-track Technology Talent Admission Scheme for technology companies and institutes for the admission of overseas and Mainland technology talents, focusing on specific technology areas such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science. He appealed to the guests to return to Hong Kong to join the innovation and technology drive.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC), Mr Albert Wong, and the Biotechnology Director of the Innovation and Technology Commission, Dr Cecilia Pang, joined part of Mr Yang's visit to the UK.

Mr Yang started his three-nation visit to France, the UK and Switzerland by first joining part of the Chief Executive's visit programme in Paris between June 19 and 21. Together with the Chief Executive, Mr Yang witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Paris by the University of Hong Kong, Institut Pasteur and the HKSTPC to set up a joint biomedical research centre within the HKSTPC's healthcare technologies research cluster.

Tomorrow (June 27, Zurich time), Mr Yang will make a brief visit to Basel and Zurich in Switzerland for the last leg of his European visit before setting off for Hong Kong.

