

Speech by CE at signing ceremony of Memorandum of Understanding for Establishing the Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding for Establishing The Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases today (January 16):

Andrew (Chairman of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), Mr Andrew Liao), Professor Shyy (President of HKUST, Professor Shyy Wei), Andy (British Consul General to Hong Kong and Macao, Mr Andrew Heyn), Thomas (Acting Consul General of the United States to Hong Kong and Macau, Mr Thomas Hodges), Professor Woolf (Director of F M Kirby Neurobiology Center of Boston Children's Hospital, Professor Clifford Woolf), Professor Rando (Director of the Paul F Glenn Center for the Biology of Aging of the Stanford University School of Medicine, Professor Thomas Rando), Professor Hardy (Professor of Neuroscience of University College London, Professor John Hardy), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to join you for this signing ceremony today, which establishes the Center for Neurodegenerative Diseases in Hong Kong, the first of its kind here.

This milestone occasion brings together four of the world's leading universities – and from three continents – for pioneering medical research here in Hong Kong. It is indeed the fourth occasion of an MoU signing ceremony for such collaborative research that I had witnessed in the past seven months. The other three MoU signing occasions involved equally distinguished and renowned institutions from France, Germany and the United States. One could not help thinking that this is clear and compelling testimony of Hong Kong's singular ability to create connections, to help people, businesses and institutions excel, whatever they're pursuing, whatever their vision. That said, I must thank those overseas renowned universities and research institutions for placing their trust in us, and our local Consulates for helping us to connect. The presence today of the United Kingdom Consul General and the Acting Consul General of the United States is much appreciated.

Developing Hong Kong into an innovation and technology (I&T) hub is central to my Government's economic policy. In my maiden Policy Address delivered in October 2017, which is just three months after I have assumed the office of the Chief Executive, I set out eight major areas for our innovation and technology progress, including expanding our infrastructure,

pooling technology talent and boosting R&D funding. Since then, my Government has allocated about US\$10 billion for I&T initiatives, including significant resources for R&D activities. Among other things, we are bolstering R&D in our universities and public research institutes. We have also instituted a super tax deduction of up to 300 per cent to private enterprises for their R&D expenditure.

No less important, we have set aside US\$1.3 billion to establish two research clusters – one for healthcare, the other for artificial intelligence and robotics. The good news is the newly created partnership we are witnessing today will apply for participation in the healthcare research cluster – known as health@InnoHK. Specifically, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Boston Children's Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, Stanford University School of Medicine and University College London will conduct research on neurodegenerative diseases, working out of Hong Kong Science Park.

As we all know, neurodegenerative diseases – particularly Alzheimer's – are becoming more prevalent in ageing populations. And while understanding of neurodegenerative diseases continues to advance, there are few effective treatments available, either to delay the onset or to affect the course of Alzheimer's and other daunting neurodegenerative diseases.

I am, however, hopeful that the combined excellence and collective commitment and expertise of four of the world's leading institutions, and their scientists and researchers, can lead to significant advances in the diagnosis and treatment of neurodegenerative diseases. I am also confident that this research consortium will create wide-ranging, world-class opportunities for the next generation of Hong Kong scientists and researchers, and in doing so, establish Hong Kong as an international centre for research in neurodegenerative diseases.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish the four universities, and everyone behind this landmark collaboration in Hong Kong, a great success. Thank you very much.



