

Malaysia at the Forefront of Driving ASEAN's Pharmaceutical Self-Reliance

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Recently, I came across an insightful piece in [*The Star* titled 'Malaysia can lead in medicine security in ASEAN,' written by Sharvin A. Subramaniam](#) from the Malaysian Organization of Pharmaceutical Industries (MOPI). It highlights the ASEAN Drug Security and Self-Reliance (ADSSR) initiative, which I see not just as a policy framework but as a wake-up call to a pivotal moment for the region to take greater ownership of its healthcare future.



A Vision Turning into Action

I strongly believe that the conversations around securing our medicine supply and reducing dependence on external sources has never been more critical, where healthcare vulnerabilities are no longer theoretical. This is a dialogue we must take seriously, not just as leaders in the pharmaceutical industry, but as individuals deeply invested in the future of healthcare in our region.

Malaysia's Strategic Role in Shaping ASEAN's Pharmaceutical Future

Malaysia has long stood on a strong foundation in healthcare, giving the country a unique advantage to lead ASEAN's journey toward pharmaceutical self-reliance. Several factors underscore this potential:

- A proven capability to manufacture high-quality generic and biosimilar medicines that meet stringent international standards
- A central location within ASEAN, enabling seamless regional and global business connectivity

- A legacy of regulatory excellence that inspires confidence among global partners
- A steadily growing pool of scientific and technical talent
- Rapidly advancing pharmaceutical infrastructure supported by forward-thinking public and private investments
- A stable and resilient economy that provides a conducive environment for long-term industrial growth and international collaboration

To me, **Malaysia embodies the potential to drive meaningful change across the region.** These were also among the core reasons why we chose Malaysia as Novugen's home. It's where our operations are rooted in local strengths but powered by a clear global vision.

Novugen's Role: Aligned in Vision, Built for Global Impact

The ADSSR outlines a clear regional objective: ensuring broader access to affordable, safe, and effective medicines. In my view, **achieving this requires moving beyond traditional paradigms and embracing high-quality, innovation-driven pharmaceutical research and development and manufacturing.** That's where Novugen stands ready.

Malaysia already has the right ingredients for success. That's why Novugen took bold actions that at the time, seen as overly ambitious. Today, our facilities meet some of the most stringent regulatory standards globally. We are especially proud to operate ASEAN's first and only USFDA-approved manufacturing facilities, including a high-containment oncology plant for OEB-5 Level compounds, designed to serve a growing portfolio of high-barrier cancer treatments for global markets.

Beyond that, our facilities are built not just to meet domestic needs, but to scale across international markets, enabling regional collaboration with a focus on improving access to critical therapies. With the goal of ensuring access to medicines that lack robust generic alternatives, we also work closely with global regulatory bodies to streamline approvals and accelerate market entry. As we see it, this is more than a business strategy. It is a moral imperative.

A Shared Goal Needs Collective Support

As a company proudly built in Malaysia with a global outlook, Novugen not only supports this vision. We are actively laying the foundation, developing systems, and building capabilities to bring it to life. But we cannot do this alone. Echoing *The Star's* article, accelerating this transformation requires regulatory alignment across ASEAN, government support for infrastructure development, championing Malaysian capabilities in regional trade

and health forums, and policies that enable seamless export and foster collaborative partnerships.

This is a collective responsibility for ASEAN. Yet in Malaysia, there is a unique opportunity to lead. That begins with initiatives to cultivate future ready talent, scale up manufacturing, and strengthen capabilities, particularly in complex generics, biosimilars, and advanced therapies. **At Novugen, this commitment drives our efforts in recruiting and training local talent, empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed to meet the demands of tomorrow's pharmaceutical landscape.**

Final Thoughts

The pandemic reminded us all that supply chains can break. And when they do, **timely access to life-saving medicines should never be in question.** I am strongly convinced that if we, as a region, want true pharmaceutical sovereignty, we must build it ourselves. That means investing in R&D, scalable manufacturing, shaping smart policies, and creating an environment where companies like Novugen and others can continue to thrive and innovate, serving not just local but regional and global needs.

I am hopeful for a future where ASEAN transforms from a dependent consumer of healthcare solutions to a confident and trusted producer of world-class, affordable medicine. **The journey has already begun, and I truly feel that Malaysia is in the lead**