

Focus on China

Focus on China: A Tale of Two Cities

As the Chinese government invests increasing amounts of money into scientific research, and biotech multinationals rush to open offices in China, opportunities for scientists are exploding. Two cities stand at the forefront of Chinese science. Beijing, close to the center of power, offers more in terms of academia, government jobs, and research. By contrast Shanghai, China's commercial hub, is home to the lion's share of biotech. Chinese scientists who studied abroad are flocking to both cities to contribute to China's scientific effort, a key pillar of its socioeconomic development. International scientists, seeing a chance to further their careers in an expanding market fueled by vast manpower and funding, and eager for a cultural adventure, are beginning to join them. China is a land of diverse opportunities and myriad challenges; from those already there, objectives, ideas, and advice vary. One thing is certain: The world's most populous nation and second-largest economy is fast becoming a global hub for scientists of the future. **By Clarissa Sebag-Montefiore**



Zhu Yi Zhun, dean of the School of Pharmacy at Shanghai's Fudan University, is one of China's most successful returnee scientists. In 2009, his status was cemented by winning the National Award for Innovative Research Work of the Returnees from the Chinese State Council. After a promising career abroad, Zhu had come back to help spur the Chinese economy via science and to further his own career.

"Coming back to China gave huge opportunities, especially for drug discovery," says Zhu, who completed postdoctoral training at the Institute of Pharmacology at Germany's University of Kiel. His work experience includes stints at the University of Washington in Seattle and the Hoechst Marion Roussel Pharma AG (now Sanofi-Aventis) in Singapore. "The Chinese government has started the drug discovery program for the last few years with big funding."

Zhu, who holds several U.S., Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), and Chinese patents for new drugs and has seen one cardioprotective drug successfully launched in Singapore, received grants for more than 160 million yuan (over US\$25 million) in China. Such generous funding, combined with the prospect of furthering science in an exciting, emerging market, was hard to turn down.

OPPORTUNITIES AND GROWTH

China is the world's fastest-growing economy. As the country



expands its scientific endeavors to match its economic prowess, many Chinese nationals are returning home—with a significant number heading to Beijing and Shanghai—to take advantage of ballooning opportunities. A career in China is also attracting a number of international scientists who are tempted by a cultural adventure combined with access to ample funding.

The impetus comes from the very top. The Chinese government regards science as an important solution to China's problems and an engine for the country's expansion. Unlike many other countries, China has the muscle,

funds, and, increasingly, talent to ensure science remains a priority. Above all, China is aiming to transform itself from a labor-based economy to an innovation-orientated nation by 2020, as outlined in its 2006–2020 Medium and Long-Term Plan for the Development of Science and Technology. *continued*>

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