

[StartmeupHK Salons by InvestHK bring innovation and GBA to forefront of this year's discussions \(with photos\)](#)

Invest Hong Kong (InvestHK) announced today (June 15) that the highly successful 2021 edition of StartmeupHK Salons came to a close on June 10, having attracted around 740 people to join the conversations. Supplementing the StartmeupHK Festival 2021 hosted by InvestHK, six virtual Salons were held worldwide in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and India, Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), with the aim of showcasing the business opportunities for start-ups and investors in Hong Kong, the GBA and beyond.

Speakers highlighted Hong Kong's proximity to the other GBA cities, one of the world's most advanced manufacturing networks, as a major factor for consideration, especially with new transport infrastructure such as the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. "As a robotics company, being close to the GBA and having close access to all the factories is really beneficial ... Being based in Hong Kong helps expanding in the greater APAC region," the COO of Rice Robotics, Ms Rhaim Kim, said. She added that Hong Kong retains tremendous potential for robot developers, stressing that the technology's multimodal nature means it could be explored in new sectors. As a grand winner of the Alibaba Entrepreneurs Fund's Jumpstarter global competition, Rice Robotics is a testament of Hong Kong's potential for robotics companies to further expand business.

A key focus of this year's Salons was on the investors' role in contributing to the entire start-up ecosystem. Throughout the events, speakers underpinned the investors' role as one that goes beyond simply funding start-ups and expecting profit in return. For the participants, investors have an unneglectable advisory role in working hand in hand with various actors within the product life cycle. "The ecosystem is extremely rich: not only with product development firms, manufacturers, and partners that can help you build your product, but also investment partners," the Director of Corporate Innovation and Partnerships at Brinc, Mr Kevin Brisebois, said.

Showcasing Hong Kong's business advantages being the Salons' main goal, panellists emphasised Hong Kong's financial and judicial attributes, which set it apart from many places in the Asia-Pacific region. "All major banks have operations in Hong Kong: Chinese banks; Japanese banks; US, UK and European banks. We really appreciate that we have access to a full spectrum of banking services. Hong Kong definitely is the right place to start," the Executive Chairman and Chief Risk Officer at fintech trade finance platform FundPark, Mr Allan Lee, said.

Having changed the way people do business, the COVID-19 pandemic remained at the centre of the discussions. For some, the pandemic exposed businesses' lack of adequate remote infrastructure to support business operations and, more importantly, the pressing need for tech providers and businesses to work together. "There's just so much more that we need to build for the support ... For the next few years, it's all about B2B or business to developers," Partner at Race Capital Ms Edith Yeung said.

With Hong Kong further developing digital banking, the events also showcased digital banking opportunities and discussed various problems faced by the digital banking sector. For the Executive Chairman of Velotrade, Mr Vittorio De Angelis, Hong Kong played a major part in the democratisation of trading, something that is now accessible to anyone. "It was monopolised by traditional financial institutions. Any institutional investor who wanted to access trade finance could not do it." Thanks to regulatory easing over the past decade, firms like his can act as a bridge between smaller and larger actors, further equalising the local finance ecosystem and making it accessible to all.

"The StartmeupHK Salons we have held in time zones around the world have been a great opportunity for businesses to share their thoughts about starting and growing in Hong Kong. Entrepreneurs highlighted our excellent infrastructure, pro-business policies, fantastic talent pool, strategic location and connection with the GBA. We look forward to supporting leading-edge businesses from around the world take their next step in Asia, starting with our home, Hong Kong," the Director-General of Investment Promotion at InvestHK, Mr Stephen Phillips, said.

Recordings of the StartmeupHK Salons will soon be available to be viewed on demand at www.startmeup.hk/salons. Please stay tuned.

About InvestHK

Invest Hong Kong is the department of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government responsible for attracting foreign direct investment and supporting overseas and Mainland businesses to set up or expand in Hong Kong. It provides free advice and customised services for overseas and Mainland companies. For more information, please visit www.investhk.gov.hk.

