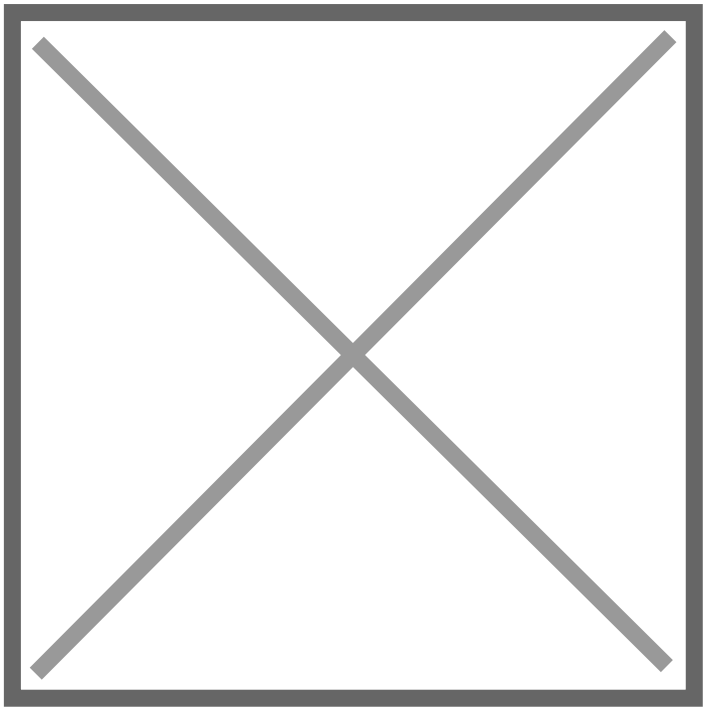
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# How Big is Small?

16 August 2012 | News



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**Ch. Srinivas Rao**
The author is
Editor of BioSpectrum
srinivasch@cybermedia.co.in

On the sidelines of an annual symposium on innovation and intellectual property organized by GE at its JFWTC Bangalore center this July, I met Dr Prabuddha Ganguli, CEO, IPR Vision & MHRD IPR Chair, Tezpur University. He showed me his new book titled Ã¢â?¬Å?Nanotechnology and Intellectual Property Rights ... Research, Design and CommercializationÃ¢â?¬?. This book, by Ganguli and his co-author Dr Siddharth Jabade, director of innovation and intellectual property rights, Asian Institute of Technology, was launched in India recently.

Here are the key observations from the book that are quite a revelation.

Nanotechnology in the marketplace has already started to impact every sphere of people's lives as Ã¢â?¬Å?nanovationsÃ¢â?¬? are embedded in various consumer products. As of March 2011, the nanotechnology consumer products inventory contains 1,317 products or product lines. Since the inception of the database in 2005 with 54 consumer products, the inventory has grown year by year with 2006 (356), 2007 (380), 2008 (803), 2009 (1015), and 2010 (1317) showing a growth in the inventory by 521 percent. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of products. These products span diverse product categories such as health and fitness (738), home and garden (209), automobile (126), food and beverages (105), multifunctional cross cutting (82), electronics and computers (59), appliances (44), and goods for children (30).

Nanotechnology has developed in verticals leading to technology-based businesses. Although technologies in some of the verticals may have developed significantly, they may not lead to successful businesses due to multiple reasons. However, due to the all-pervasive nature of the Ã¢â?¬Å?nano,Ã¢â?¬? lateral linking of these verticals could lead to partnerships that are mutually symbiotic and open up new and innovative business opportunities.

A case in point is that of Evident Technologies one of New York State's first nanotechnology companies. It filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in July 2009, after being sued for patent infringement by Invitrogen citing mounting legal fees associated with its defense. It had amassed nearly $1 million in legal fees-significant compared to its $3.8 million in assets. Through bankruptcy, Evident and Invitrogen reached a deal. Evident acknowledged it infringed Invitrogen's patent Ã¢â?¬Å?in certain narrow limitationsÃ¢â?¬?. Evident also agreed never to perform life sciences work. In exchange, Invitrogen dropped its lawsuit. On March 31, 2010 a federal judge approved Evident's plan to exit bankruptcy. The company restructured its business and today it is a leading nanotechnology company specializing in the commercialization of quantum dot semiconductor nanocrystals.

Every sunrise in the last few decades has been a booster to nanotechnology that has brought several innovations to light. Ã¢â?¬Å?The new rules of the market ecosystem will demand creative and cooperative competition that will see higher level of precompetitive collaboration operating with higher levels of cautious openness so as to collectively maximise delivery from the minimal resources,Ã¢â?¬? concluded Dr Ganguli.