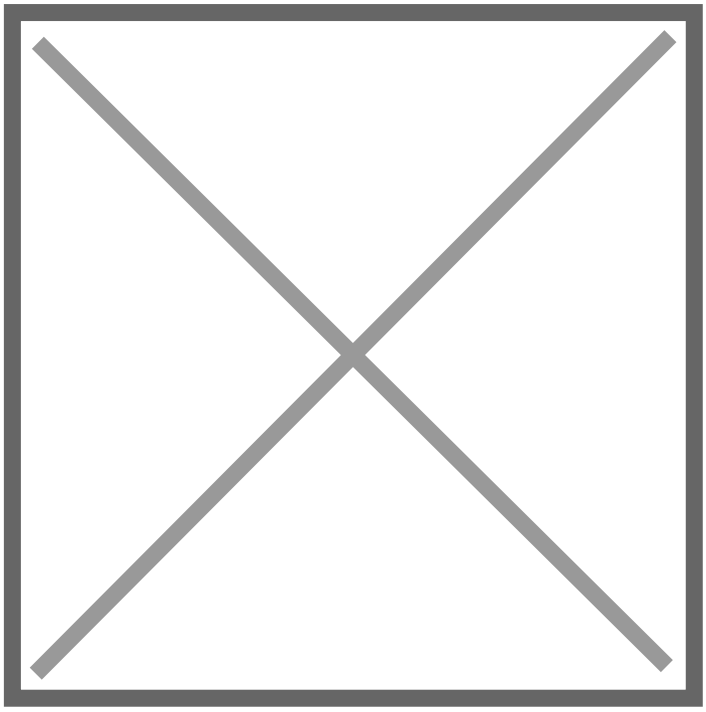
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'We want to outbid market growth'

14 November 2011 | News



Mr Prantik Mukherjee

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Head, Merck Millipore

Merck Milliopore, the life sciences division of Merck KGaA of Darmstadt, Germany, recently announced the launch of Merck Millipore India Innovation Awards (MMIIA). The program is the first-of-its-kind and is intended to recognize government-funded and not-for-profit research undertaken by scientists.

In an interview with BioSpectrum, Mr Prantik Mukherjee, head of Merck Millipore, talks about the launch of MMIIA, the company's growth, challenges and opportunities, among other things.

Q What is the objective behind the launch of Merck Millipore award?

From my 20 years of experience in this industry, I can say that the scientists are doing a great job in advancing research in the field. However, they also face hiccups due to funding delays. Through this award, we want to bring scientists and Merck Millipore together for promoting innovation.

The awards aim to acknowledge efforts of scientists who are working tirelessly to produce innovative research outside commercial research centers.

Unlike other awards, the MMIIA hopes to celebrate, encourage and inspire innovation amongst India's scientific community in the life sciences sector. The idea is to promote research in areas such as green chemistry, medicinal chemistry, chemical and bioanalytics, proteomics, genomics, drug discovery and delivery, biomanufacturing, biomarkers and synthetic biology.

Q How has the acquisition of Millipore helped Merck? What is the growth story so far?

It has been only 18 months and we have had a very encouraging journey. Integration of these two leading brands has been rolled out globally and is still in process. One aim is to bring together two great organizations and helping us to establish a better and improved product profile for clients. We are now looking forward to making efforts to take this forward.

Our focus has been to train people, innovate and update products. We have rapidly achieved great progress, but I think it is too early to talk about revenue figures. However, I would like to add that the figures have always remained above the market growth.

Q How do you set yourself apart from competition in the market?

We are strong in systems biology and can help scientists in this research. Besides that, we also supply pharma ingredient,

filter validation and cartridge. Filter technology is the expertise of Millipore, whereas chemistry is the forte of Merck.

With the brands coming together, we are trying to bridge the gap and make it our strength.

Our competitors are only in one area of the process chain, whereas Merck Millipore is a complete solutions provider. This is our uniqueness in the competition that we face mostly from global competitors. It is also fair enough to have competition as without it life would be boring.

Q What kind of challenges do you face as a biosupplier?

India has tremendous growth opportunities, but we are still at the base of the learning curve. There is a big difference between the thinking of people in India and their western counterparts.

Our challenge is to bridge that gap and leverage the opportunity. Our technology is to help scientists in India not only in India but even after they have moved out.

As far as logistics are concerned, all developing countries, like India, are facing issues. However, we are setting up many processes to overcome this challenge. We are trying to ensure that goods reach clients as quickly as possible.

Q What opportunities do you see in the markets of India and China?

India and China are surely going to be big opportunity tickets. This is why companies want to invest here. My personal opinion is that India offers more security to manufacturers. The country offers advantages in terms of talent, IP protection and research. In case of China, we can say that it is more about volume, like raw material or APIs.

China also has an active biosimilar model but I think India still has an edge. The recent example of various types of tie-ups: Biocon with Pfizer, and GSK with Strides Acrolabs and AstraZenca strengthen India's case. These can be stepping stones for furthering the industry's growth in India.

Q What is the future outlook of the company?

The future outlook is to outbid market growth and continue investments through the areas of production, regulation and application. These three areas will drive our business. Our focus is completely on business operation and catering to the changing needs of customers.

Rahul Koul in NewDelhi