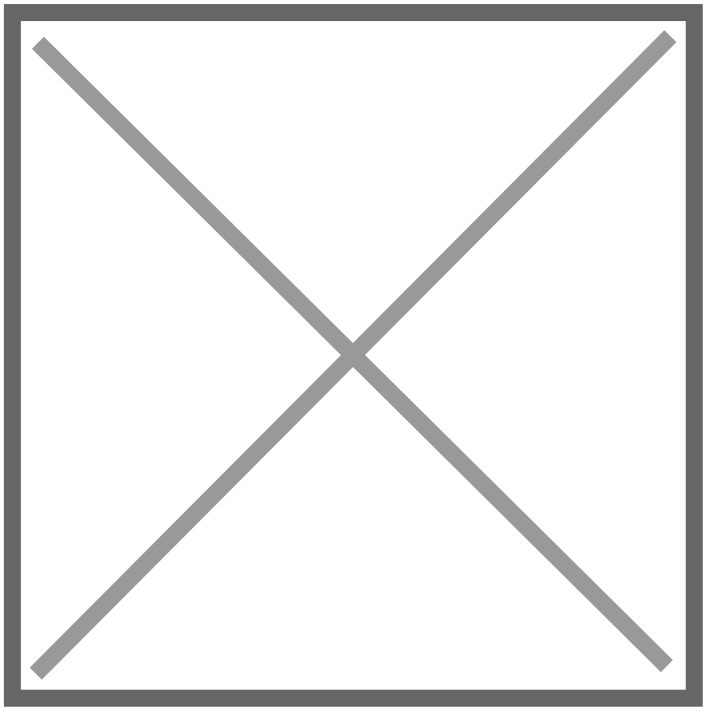
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# Bangalore Bio 2005

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**Bangalore Bio 2005, the three-day tradeshow and conference held in April in Bangalore, props up Karnataka's BT initiatives.**



Biotechnology in India is still at a nascent stage. And it's time now to amplify the growth of biotech nology. The fifth edition of Bangalore Bio 2005 held in Bangalore during April 22-24, 2005 deliberated on how the country should gear up to achieve its revenue target of $5 billion by the year 2010. Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairperson of Karnataka's Vision Group on Biotechnology and CMD, Biocon Ltd, speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the event, cited biotechnology development in Karnataka as an example of successful partnering. "While Biocon has tied up with Vaccinex for development of monoclonal antibodies and Nobex of USA for development of oral insulin; Strand Genomics has joined hands with MediBic of Japan and Avesthagen has tied up with Biomerieux of France for diagnostics." Shaw also mentioned other biopartnerships forged by a few more Bangalore-based companies including Syngene, Reametrix, NCBS, AstraZeneca and Bangalore Genei.

"The success of positioning India as a strong partner for global companies will depend on the ability of the Indian biotechnology to apply its people resource in a knowledge intensive manner. International bio-partnering has already gained visibility in India and especially in Bangalore where several collaborative partnerships have been initiated," she noted.

Karnataka Chief Minister N Dharam Singh, who presided over the function, said that the state government gave utmost priority to attracting investments into Karnataka and the high-level committee which approves major industrial projects, had cleared projects worth over Rs 40,000 crore in the last 10 months. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) had sanctioned Rs 14.45 crore for Bangalore Helix biotech park and work on the project would begin by June, Dharam Singh informed. A sum of Rs 11.5 crore had already been released to the Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology (IBAB) to set up its campus in the biotech park, the chief minister added.

"Karnataka has accounted for the highest number of new biotech companies established over the last 12 months and the biotech sector in the state has attracted maximum VC funding of $100 million." Out of the 265 companies in India, Karnataka is home to 131 companies of which 127 are based in Bangalore, Singh noted adding that Bangalore is the fastest growing biocluster in India. The companies employed a total manpower of 12000 and a total scientific manpower of 7500 in 2005.

In his remarks, Dr Anbumani Ramadoss, the union minister for health and family welfare, pointed out that the global biotech sector is valued at $40 billion with a market capitalization of $375 billion. Nearly 250 drugs have emanated from biotechnology over the last decade, which now constitute a significant 20 percent of the pharmaceuticals pie. By the year 2025, the ratio will be skewed in favour of biotech drugs which are expected to assume a share of 75 percent, Dr Ramadoss pointed out.

The union minister informed that the medicinal plant industry in India was picking up and many countries had shown active interests in adopting the Ayurveda and Siddha systems of medicine in their healtcare sector. He said the government would invest more in biotechnology, which had a holistic approach to prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases. The Hepatitis B programme would be incorporated into the immunization schedule, he said. The government would also boost stem cell research in India, he said and informed that the country would host an international conference on stem cell research in September 2005 in Mumbai. He further told the gathering that the government would regulate clinical trials keeping in mind ethical issues but it would ensure that there are no hurdles for scientists conducting quality research. Dr Ramadoss said a bill towards this would be shortly introduced in the Parliament.

In his address Dr M K Bhan, DBT secretary, said that the Central government would accord priority to global partnerships and provide a hassle-free environment to global partners.

Biotechnology is a frontier area of science and technology having a great potential for welfare of humanity, said Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje in her address. "We need to focus on research, development and IPR generation in the area of vaccines, diagnostics, new medicines derived from utilization of traditional knowledge, value added products through application of food biotechnology, increased productivity through pest and disease resistant genetically modified crops and eco-friendly technologies."

In his address, Sir Michael Arthur, British High Commissioner to India, said the UK government was very keen on economic partnerships with India. UK-based Randox Laboratories would set up a diagnostics kit manufacturing unit in Bangalore. Shantha Biotechnics had signed an agreement with Polytherix, a spin-out biotech firm of the University of London, to make an affordable PEG-interferon product for treatment of Hepatitis C. Zenosis Ltd, which has built and developed protein bio chips had entered into a pact with Edutech of India to share expertise in knowledge support services.

The fifth edition of Bangalore Bio 2005 saw the participation of 15 countries, nine states and 125 companies. While Jairam Ramesh, national economic advisor and member of Parliament, stressed on the globalization of Indian biotech, Nobel Laureate Prof Sydney Brenner, chairman, Biomedical Research Council, Singapore, spoke on economics. He said " Biotech is not a new science. But the central dogma of biotech that DNA makes RNA and RNA makes proteins is changed today. It must be added that proteins make money."

Ch. Srinivas Rao and Namratha Jagtap