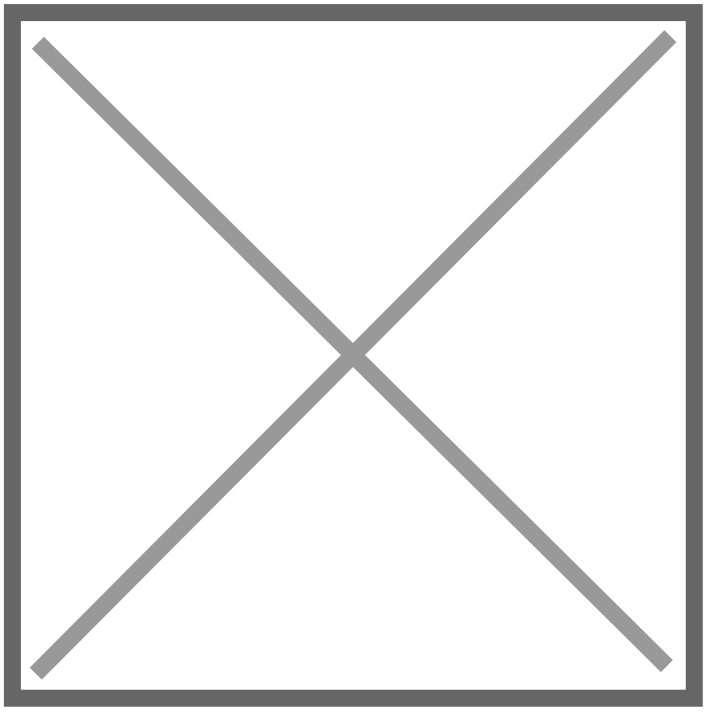
BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

Biotech's Super Achievers

14 December 2006 | News



Biotech's Super Achievers



It is December again and it is time to announce the 4th BioSpectrum Awards. The Awards process has continued the trend and has picked out some of the super achievers of the biotechnology community, whose work stands out in the recent past.

Dr RA Mashelkar may be a chemical engineer but has been one of the country's top technocrat for over a decade. The last six Prime Ministers, starting from Rajiv Gandhi, and of course the current PM, Manmohan Singh, had turned to Mashelkar to untangle many ticklish science and technology policy issue in the past two decades. Mashelkar himself has lost the count of the number of task forces he has headed to formulate the national policy-from recombinant DNA products to biofuels to tackling spurious drugs. A tireless crusader for intellectual property rights, he has won the hearts and minds of the biotech industry in last five-six years. So there was no doubt among the jury members that Mashelkar should be bestowed the BioSpectrum Life Time Achievement Award just 3 weeks before he hands over the baton of CSIR chief to his equally eminent successor Dr V Prakash.

As the jury, headed by the 2005 BioSpectrum Person of the Year, Dr MK Bhan, studied the dossiers of potential winners, the name of Rasi Seeds chairman, M Ramasami, emerged as the strongest candidate for the Person of the Year in 2006. For, Rasi Seeds had emerged as the largest seller of Bt cotton seeds in the last season and this Attur, Tamil Nadu, based company has rewritten the rules of technology adoption in this highly competitive arena. Ramasami's unflinching faith in the capacity of modern technology and his risk taking abilities were amply rewarded by the country's farmers, boosting Rasi's turnover to over Rs 300 crore from Rs 80 crore within two years.

Dr Villoo Morawala-Patell and Avesthagen have been trendsetters in the biotech sector since 2000. It was only a matter of time before her plunge into the world of entrepreneurship from the cushy environs of a publicly-funded laboratory and the trailblazing endeavors got the recognition from her peers. So she was chosen the BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year, in a year when Avesthagen made some remarkable moves in its quest to reach the coveted Top 10 global biotech companies by 2015. Dr Villoo's dream is to take Avesthagen to the top of the table with revenues in the range of $5 billion within 10 years from the current level of $10 million.

When the jury considered the biotech products released in the market in the last 12-18 months, the portfolio of Plasma products from Reliance Life Sciences (RLS) was the clear winner. The Reliance products increases the affordability for

Indians who need it the most and also the jury was unanimous that the single-minded attention paid by Reliance Chairman, Mukesh Ambani, to RLS will change the face of Indian biotech within a few years.

Finally, the jury decided to create a Special BioSpectrum Leadership Award to recognize the immense efforts of the Science and Technology Minister, Kapil Sibal, in pursuing the simplification process of India's biotechnology regulatory system through the tricky minefields of the country's policy making system. When he was made the S&T Minister, it was considered a demotion for one of the country's most celebrated lawyers. Everyone expected him to be the Law Minister but the Congress party's internal power equations did not make that happen. With his amazing grasp of the country's S&T strengths and weaknesses, Sibal set about changing it for the better and within a year, he was elevated as the country's first full time Cabinet for S&T in the last three decades.

Every one of the Award winners have shared with us what makes them tick and the secrets behind their successes. Read on. And also be there in Bangalore on 11th December for the Awards presentation ceremony. In fact, the annual BioSpectrum Awards have become a much-awaited event every December and this year's awards are more special because Bio-Rad has generously agreed to sponsor the crowning of these extraordinary achievers by their peers.

<sureshn@cybermedia.co.in>