

Mr Venugopalan: India has not made any significant investments in analytical sector

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Indian Analytical Instruments Association (IAIA), an exclusive professional body with a vision to promote, encourage and develop the growth of the analytical instruments industry in India has announced its newly elected executive committee with Mr KV Venugopalan, president of Waters India as president of the association for a period of three years. An electronics engineer with an MBA degree in marketing, Mr Venugopalan has been associated with Waters India from 1983 and has presided over the company since 1997. Under his leadership, in the past 25 years, Waters business in India grew significantly and is now one of the largest analytical organization in Indian analytical market. *BioSpectrum* spoke to Mr Venugopalan about his action plans to strengthen the Indian analytical sector, current activities and challenges for IAIA.

Can you elaborate on the current status and activities of IAIA?

IAIA, an exclusive professional body formed in 1996 with a vision to promote, encourage and develop the growth of the analytical Instruments Industry. The primary objective is to create and share knowledge leading to better relationships between all players. IAIA aims to be the premier body working towards policy making and planning thus promoting welfare by integrating the entire analytical fraternity. We currently have 78 members (59 corporate life members and 19 individual life members) including Cryogen, Dionex, Ind tech, Lab India, Perkin Elmer, Ranbaxy Fine Chemicals, Spinco, Thermo Fisher Scientific, and Waters, to name a few analytical fraternity. We organize and conduct many activities for the benefit of our members and Anacon is the main event. Employee training and seminars are some other activities that are being conducted by IAIA.

What are some of your plans as the new president of IAIA?

The new executive committee had our first meeting recently and we have chartered a detailed action plan about going forward to achieve the objectives as defined in our charter. Ensuring active participation of all existing members and increasing the number of membership is one of our main game plan. We aim to have the first group meeting with all the

CEOs of analytical companies very soon and further refine our future course of actions.

Besides holding CEOs meeting we also have plans to double our membership and conduct many programs and workshops on technical issues, legal challenges, HR issues, and taxation for the benefit of the members. To achieve this, sub committees- events, finance, technical, legal, scientific-will be formed, and these will bring in more active participation of the companies in the sectors.

IAIA as a body has been restricted to organize conferences and exhibitions. So what is your next move?

The challenges faced by all the companies in the Indian analytical industry is same but in varying degrees depending upon the segment they are operating and the customer type. Analytical technology is critical for our industrial and economic growth besides achieving technological leadership in the coming decades. Currently, we are totally dependent on foreign suppliers for modern technology and instruments as our government has not made any significant investments in this area. Since our industry association is small, we are unable to make any significant impact in policy making.

Our challenges also include manpower related, both availability of qualified professionals and attrition, margin pressures and associated difficulties in making investments for future growth. IAIA plans to discuss this at various levels and do whatever it can to alleviate the problems faced by the members.

The suppliers segment though organized, to some extent, its voice is still unheard. Any plans of making it as a body where its concerns and issues are brought before the policy makers?

As mentioned earlier it is certainly in the interest of our nation to take the high technology segment of analytical industry to ensure our future growth and advancement and we plan to raise the issues at the appropriate forums in due course of time. We are considering various options such as working with industry bodies like Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) so as to reach out to the policy makers.

In an era of globalization, we are seeing more of mergers and acquisitions (M&As) happening in the supplier segment. Your views on the role of channel partners?

We all have to learn to live with M&A. channel partners in India could be either the direct subsidiary of the foreign company or a distributor and in both cases there would be a brief period of uncertainty and associated confusion both for customers as well as employees. Company that manages this transition period efficiently becomes successful and others may take some more time.