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DBT, Piramal Life Sciences tie-up

02 September 2011 | News

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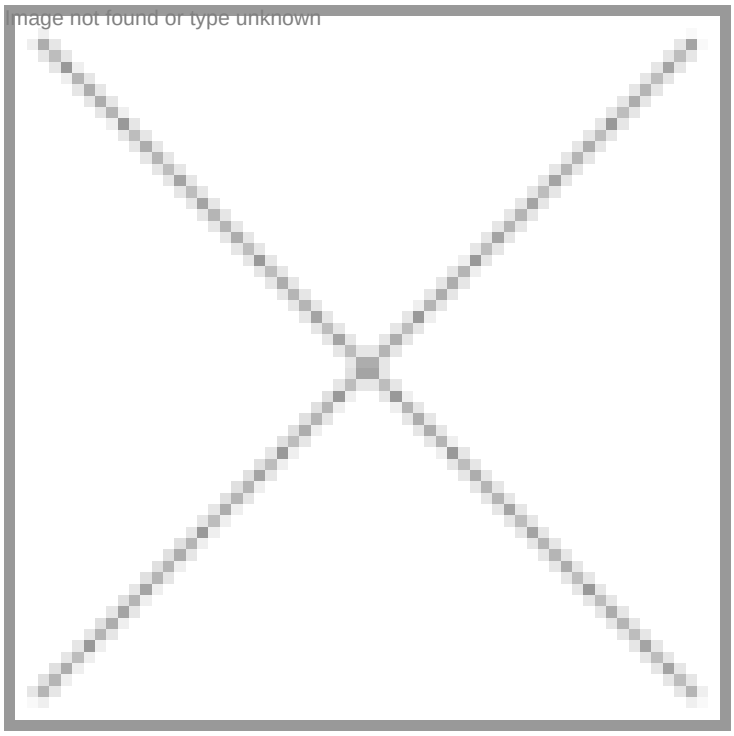

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, and Piramal Life Sciences have begun phase II of their drug discovery public private partnership to find new drugs from 14,000 bioactive cultures discovered in a nationwide search for new drugs from biodiverse habitats across the country in collaboration with nine national institutes. During the phase I of the program, which is jointly funded by the DBT and and Piramal Life Sciences, a total of 245,000 different microbes were collected and characterized at the national centers. Extracts from these microbes were screened for biological activities across four different therapeutic areas - cancer, diabetes, inflammation and infectious diseases. Based on the results of these studies, the team has identified greater than 14,000 cultures that showed potent activities in the above disease conditions: 5,000 extracts for anti-infective, 500 extracts for anti-cancer, 6,000 for anti-diabetes and 2,900 extracts with anti-inflammatory properties. All these cultures are in the process of classification and storage in a national repository created by the DBT at the National Centre for Cell Science.

Innovative research at KIIT University

Bhubaneswar-based KIIT-technology business incubator at KIIT University is working on many innovative concepts supported by the Department of Science & Technology, Govt of India. The team headed by Dr Mrutyunajy Suar includes Mr Vikalp Viswakarma and Mr Niladri Bhusan Patia. The team is trying to develop the safest vaccine to provide protection against several diarrheal diseases caused by bacterial pathogens Salmonella, Shigella, E. coli and Vibrio cholera. This is being tested in mice and has shown promising results so far. Dr Suar and Mr Satyapriya Jena have also developed a multiplex PCR protocol to identify the causative agents of diseases within two hours.

Focusing on the rural mass, such tests are being developed at very low price.Also, Ms Regalin Rout and Prof Peter Luthy at KIIT identified and isolated unique bacterial strain from the agricultural fields that is highly active against the larvae of Culex,

Aedes and Anopheles.

Conference held on managing BT crops

At the round table conference organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) at New Delhi, the experts from academia and industry discussed various burning issues on the management of biotech crops. TERI organized the conference titled â€œManaging Biotech Cropsâ€? (July 4-5, 2011) in New Delhi. The conference witnessed detailed discussion between policy makers, experts from research institutes and industry representatives. There was an overall consensus among experts on the improvement of effective science communication, dissemination of knowledge on biotech crops, and the re-look on the regulatory mechanisms. The two-day conference witnessed technical sessions on sustainability of food production, genetic improvement of crop plants, choices of usage, global acceptability and lack of harmonization of regulatory laws, good agricultural practices and developing risk assessment & management procedures. The concluding session was chaired by Dr M K Bhan, secretary, Department of Biotechnology.

Indo-US partner in biotech research

The Stanford India Biodesign program has resulted in 20 patents being filed and several proto-types of affordable bio-medical devices and technologies developed that are at various pre-commercialization stages. Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Ashwani Kumar, at INDO-US Science and Technology Innovation Expo in New Delhi on July 19, said the two countries will take this forward. India and the US will also partner to address challenges of wheat genome sequencing; human genetic-genome analysis; stem cell research; nano biotechnology; plant breeding technologies and food security; micro-electronics and material science technology; nano science and supercomputing.

Aeras, CNBG MoU for TB vaccines

Aeras and the China National Biotech Group (CNBG) have signed a memorandum of understanding for the organizations to jointly develop tuberculosis (TB) vaccines in China and other parts of the world. The partnership is intended to leverage both organizations' capabilities to support the development of TB vaccines. The scope of potential activities will cover the full spectrum of product development, including pre-clinical development, process development and manufacturing, and clinical development in TB and potentially other disease areas. Details of the specific activities and areas of focus of the collaboration will be set forth in a future definitive agreement.