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Ranbaxy partners with Novavax

Ranbaxy Laboratories, Inc., a wholly-owned US subsidiary of the Indian pharmaceutical giant has entered into an agreement with Novavax Inc., a specialty biopharmaceutical company, to evaluate a new transdermal product. This product has been formulated using Novavax's proprietary Micellar Nanoparticle (MNP) technology.

Speaking about the agreement, Nelson M Sims, president and CEO, Novavax Inc., said, "This agreement demonstrates the merits of our MNP technology to other companies as a value-added proprietary delivery technology for novel drug candidates. This is an example of the commercial and development opportunities micellar nanoparticle technology offers Novavax and our partners".

Though the specific terms of the agreement are confidential, Ranbaxy's payment to Novavax includes funding to complete a proof of concept study. Upon successful completion of the proof of concept study, the companies expect to enter into a broad commercialization and development agreement.

Wipro, Sun to offer integrated package for biotech fraternity

Wipro Infotech has announced that it would be offering ready-to-run bioinformatics applications powered by Sunworkstations and servers. According to a press release, the package would include the BioWorkstation and BioCluster, which would provide life science organizations, with ever increasing needs of computing power, an ability to harness a group of interconnected processors delivering availability and scale.

Speaking on this offer, Wipro Infotech enterprise platforms GM Ashok Tripathy, said, "The benefits of using this package are manifold. Firstly, users can focus on using these applications rather than spending time setting them up. Secondly, better time utilization will result in quality research and increased productivity. Third, the return on IT infrastructure will be much greater because of improved system utilization. Lastly, there will arise lots of opportunities for collaboration as a result of an expanded user base for bio-computing applications."

- CyberMedia News

Glenmark Labs inks pacts with TASC Pharmaceuticals

Glenmark Laboratories Limited, a niche formulation and biopharmaceutical player, has announced an integrated alignment pact with TASC Pharmaceuticals Ltd, a research driven API Company. The combined entity will be an integrated player both in pharmaceuticals (based on chemical substances) and biopharmaceuticals (based on biologics) with presence over entire value chain and is valued at over Rs 1,200 crore.

Mark Saldhana, managing director, Glenmark Labs said, "Companies that are fully vertically integrated, having presence in the entire value chain and having global presence offering bouquet of niche products will be better positioned in the new scenario and our amalgamation pact with TASC will not only allow us to backward integrate in terms of our API requirements but also allow us to enhance our true potential due to wider product basket, better market access, leading position and comprehensive R&D capabilities."

Helix licenses biological software suite to CMSD

Helix Genomics Pvt Ltd (HGPL), a Hyderabad-based bio-computational research and software development company, has announced the licensing of its premiere biological software suite, Biological Operating System (BOS) to the Centre for Modelling, Simulation and Design (CMSD) at the University of Hyderabad.

BOS is believed to be the first of its kind among the existing biological softwares and is unique in being the higher-level user friendly Object Oriented Biological Programming Environment (O2-BPE). BOS is indigenously developed and patented technology from Helix Genomics.

Explaining the license, Mohan R K Nimmagadda, CEO, Helix Genomics Pvt Ltd, said the bio-researcher is offered a user-friendly software environment enabling timely and efficient implementation of research projects. The license has been extended to cover all the research labs at the School of Life Sciences, University of Hyderabad. This will facilitate in building long term research collaboration with HGPL delivering better and faster computational solutions.

Stress on need to double food production by 2050

January 2005 marked the official beginning of a year-long celebration commemorating the 100th anniversary of Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). The institute organized a three-day scientific convention as part of its centenary celebrations this month. The key attraction was Dr Borlaug's Coromandel Lecture "From the Green to the Gene Revolution: A 21st Century Challenge".

"Since 1997, per capita production of wheat has been declining because of the emergence of new diseases, such as stem rust. If we can use modern biotechnology tools to transfer rust resistance in rice to wheat, it would make a huge contribution to farmers," Dr Borlaug said. He observed, "There is a need to double food production by 2050 if hunger is to be banished from the world and the ongoing 'gene revolution' can definitely play a part in this."

Two Indian journals in list of prior art journals

In a major breakthrough, for the first time two scientific journals from developing countries, in particular from India, have been included in the coveted list of the prior art journals used for prior art search before grant of patent(s) by the International Search Authorities. So far journals from some of the developed countries only were included in the prestigious list.

The World Intellectual Property Organization has informed that in the meeting of the international authorities held under Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT), it has been unanimously decided to include India journals, namely, Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge (IJTK) and Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Abstracts (MAPA) in the Non Patent Literature (NPL) part of the PCT Minimum Documentation.

Tata Motors, IOC tie up for bio-diesel

Tata Motors has begun a pilot program to use bio-diesel for its fleet of buses, a project jointly undertaken with the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). A petrol pump, exclusively dedicated for bio-diesel was unveiled and a fleet of 43 buses was flagged off from the Tata Motors facilities in Pune.

MITS plans Jatropha plantations

Orissa-based Majhighariani Institute of Technology (MITS) is planning massive Jatropha plantations in 13 districts in Orissa covering over a lakh of hectare of wasteland for bio-diesel. The institute has set up a laboratory at Raigada where it is going to process it and convert it into bio-fuel. The project is estimated to cost Rs 500 crore. The institute is under the patronage of Basantidevi Charitable Trust (BCT) based in Raigada district.

Dr Reddy's bag \$56 m funding

Dr Reddy's Laboratories has entered into a \$56-million agreement with ICICI Venture Funds Management Company for the development and commercialization of ANDAs to be filed in 2004-05 and 2005-06. ICICI Venture will fund the development, registration and legal costs on a pre-determined basis. Dr Reddy's will pay ICICI Venture royalty on net sales for a period of five years.

- *CyberMedia News*

Take Solutions to launch life sciences BPO

Take Solutions, a technology enabled business solutions company, is all set to launch a new BPO for the pharmaceutical and biotech industry, by the end of December 2005, in Chennai. Take Solutions CEO Ram Yeleswarapu said, "Pharmaceutical companies, from June 2005 are required to provide the United States' Food & Drug Administration (FDA) all products information in XML format in compliance with the structured product labeling (SPL) standard. This BPO division would help both the pharma and biotech manufacturers satisfy the FDA norms. Besides, it will also benefit the Indian pharma and biotech exporters, to meet the FDA norms."

He added that Take's new product range, Submit SPL, a cost effective, reliable and smart way to produce labels in the FDA compliant format, which was launched two months ago in the US received a good response from among the pharma manufacturers.

With a current employee base of around 400, Take Solutions intends to increase its headcount to 500, an addition of 100 with the launch of BPO service in the life sciences domain.

Vidyalakshmi P S, CyberMedia News

Biovitrum acquires Cambridge Biotechnology

Biovitrum has agreed to acquire Cambridge Biotechnology Ltd, a Cambridge UK-based private drug discovery company. Through this move, Biovitrum is developing its therapeutic area base, advancing and balancing the medical and commercial potential of the product portfolio, expanding the technology platform and strengthening its position as a leading European player. As a subsidiary of Biovitrum, Cambridge Biotechnology will continue to work as an autonomous, highly skilled and innovative R&D unit, based in Cambridge, UK. "I am really excited about this acquisition. This kicks off our new R&D strategy, it expands our therapeutic area base and specifically gives us two advanced projects with substantial potential, of which one is already in clinical phase I", said Anders Ullman, senior vice president, R&D, Biovitrum.

Epimmune, IDM agree to combine businesses

Epimmune Inc., a developer of vaccines for cancer and infectious diseases, and IDM SA (Immuno-Designed Molecules), a biopharmaceutical company specializing in immunotherapy for the treatment of cancer, announced the signing of a definitive agreement under which Epimmune will combine with privately-held IDM in an all-stock transaction. By combining, Epimmune and IDM expect to create a leading company in immunotherapeutics, with a broader and more mature product pipeline, nearer-term product revenue opportunities, an improved cash position, and increased visibility in the financial markets. The combined company will focus on seven product candidates in clinical development for cancer and infectious disease indications. IDM's lead product candidate, Mepact, has completed a Phase III clinical trial in the US for the treatment of osteosarcoma. The Company will also maintain strategic partnerships with Sanofi-Aventis, Medarex and Innogenetics.