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BioSpectrum awards excellence

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The BioSpectrum Awards 2011 nite, held in Bangalore, witnessed the celebration of excellence in the young and dynamic biotech industry

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The winners of the BioSpectrum Awards 2011 (L to R): Dr Swaminathan Sethuraman, director of SASTRA's Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials Center, Thanjavur; Ms Sudha Kanago, head of global resourcing practice & Mr Hemant Rehani, head of clinical practice, Quintiles India; Mr G S Krishnan, regional president, Novozymes South Asia; Mr Akash Puranik, VP-marketing, Biocon; Dr Rajesh Jain, joint MD, Panacea Biotech, New Delhi; Mr S Thyagarajan, chairman, Spinco, Chennai; Dr Lalji Singh, VC, Banaras Hindu University; Dr G D Yadav, VC, ICT, Mumbai; Prof Virander S Chauhan, director, ICGEB; Mr Supreet Deshpande, CEO & founder, VLife Sciences, Pune; Dr Chetan E Chitnis, principal leader- malaria group, ICGEB; Dr D C Jain, GM, IPCA Labs; Dr P Sateesh Kumar, director-research, Nuziveedu Seeds; Dr M Z Abidin, dean of the faculty of sciences, Hamdard University; Mr Govind Rao, VP - BioIT, Ocimum BioSolutions

The 9th edition of the annual BioSpectrum Awards nite recognized and honored individuals and groups who have excelled and achieved honors in their fields of endeavor in the biotech industry. The event that took place at the plush Sheraton Hotel at Brigade Gateway in Bangalore on December 16, 2011, was made memorable with the presence of about 200 eminent researchers and industry leaders from the biotech space.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Abraham Mathew, chief editor of BioSpectrum, lauded the changing face of the biotech industry and elaborated on the selection process involved in choosing the nominees for the BioSpectrum Awards.

A panel discussion, moderated by Mr N Suresh, group editor, BioSpectrum, on 'Why should society support biotech' set the ball rolling for an evening of celebrations of an industry striving towards greater achievements in India.

Prof P K Khosla, vice chancellor of Shoolini University in Solan, Himachal Pradesh, shared interesting insights from the academic world and stressed on the need for more academia-industry partnerships. "The ranking system for educational universities worldwide is an important indicator of the quality of education imparted. The criteria for such rankings is that 30 percent of weightage is given to industry-academia relations. Industries should come forward to collaborate with universities," he urged.

Based on the annual survey of India's biotech industry, conducted by BioSpectrum along with the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) in May and June, and another survey to rank the biotech teaching institutions in India, conducted by BioSpectrum, the number one companies and institutions in different categories were honored.

Receiving the Best BioPharma Company Award, Mr Akash Puranik, vice president - marketing, Biocon, said, "We have just received three global deals and this award, after the deals, is like the icing on the cake."

Spinco Chairman Mr S Thyagarajan, who received the Best Technology Provider of the Year Award from Dr Sathish

Ravetkar, senior director, Serum Institute of India, Pune, dedicated it to fellow 'Spincoites' and said, "This is a very happy occasion as we have been waiting for years to be ranked one."

Mrsthyagarajanreceivesthebesttechnologyprovideroftheyearaward	Spinco Chairman Mr S Thyagarajan receives the Best Technology Provider of the Year Award from Dr Sathish Ravetkar, senior director, Serum Institute of India, Pune
Mrgskrishnanreceivesthebioindustrialcompanyoftheyearaward	Mr G S Krishnan, regional president, Novozymes South Asia, receives the BioIndustrial Company of the Year Award from Dr Shenoy, director, Padmashree Group of Educational Institutions
Mrakashpuranikreceivesthebestbiopharmacompanyoftheyearaward	Mr Akash Puranik, VP - marketing, Biocon, receives the Best BioPharma Company of the Year Award from Mr Ramesh Raju, executive director, Oxford Group of Institutions
Mrgovindraoreceivesthebioinformaticscompanyoftheyearaward	Mr Govind Rao, VP, BioIT, Ocimum Biosolutions, receives the BioInformatics Company of the Year Award from Dr S D Ravetkar, senior director, Serum Institute of India, Pune

Dr P Sateesh Kumar receives the bioagriculture company of the year award	Dr P Sateesh Kumar, director Nuziveedu Seeds, receives the BioAgriculture Company of the Year Award from Prof P K Khosla, VC, Shoolini University, Himachal Pradesh
Mr Hemant Rehani, head, clinical practice, & Ms Sudha Kanago, head, global functioning resourcing practice, Quintiles India, jointly receive the BioServices Company of the Year Award from Mr N Suresh, group editor, BioSpectrum	
Dr Lalji Singh, VC, BHU, hands over the Best Public Biotech School Award to Dr G D Yadav, VC, ICT, Mumbai	
Dr Swaminathan Sethuraman receives the best private biotech school award	Dr Swaminathan Sethuraman, director of SASTRA's Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials Center, Thanjavur receives the Best Private Biotech School Award from Dr Lalji Singh, VC, BHU

Dr M Z Abdin, dean, faculty of sciences, Hamdard University, and Dr D C Jain, GM, IPCA Labs, receive a special category award for Public Private Partnership Excellence from Ms Deepanwita Chattopadhyay, CEO of IKP Knowledge Park	Dr M Z Abdin, dean, faculty of sciences, Hamdard University, and Dr D C Jain, GM, IPCA Labs, receive a special category award for Public Private Partnership Excellence from Ms Deepanwita Chattopadhyay, CEO of IKP Knowledge Park
Dr Lalji Singh VC, BHU, receives the BioSpectrum Lifetime Achievement Award from Mr Pradeep Gupta, chairman of CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum	Dr Lalji Singh, VC, BHU, receives the BioSpectrum Lifetime Achievement Award from Mr Pradeep Gupta, chairman of CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum
Prof Virander S Chauhan, director, ICGEB, (left) presents the BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year Award to Mr Supreet Deshpande, CEO & founder, VLife Sciences	Prof Virander S Chauhan, director, ICGEB, (left) presents the BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year Award to Mr Supreet Deshpande, CEO & founder, VLife Sciences
Prof Virander S Chauhan, director, ICGEB and Dr Chetan E Chitnis, principal leader-malaria group, ICGEB, receive the BioSpectrum Person of the Year Awards from Mr Hans Guenter Loeffler, deputy consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bangalore	Prof Virander S Chauhan, director, ICGEB and Dr Chetan E Chitnis, principal leader-malaria group, ICGEB, receive the BioSpectrum Person of the Year Awards from Mr Hans Guenter Loeffler, deputy consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bangalore

Dr Rajesh Jain, joint MD, Panacea Biotec, along with his wife and team, receives the BioSpectrum Product of the Year for PacliALL from Mr Abraham Mathew, chief editor, BioSpectrum

Mr G S Krishnan, regional president, Novozymes South Asia, received the BioIndustrial Company of the Year Award from Dr Rajesh Shenoy, director of Padmashree Group of Educational Institutions.

For Quintiles India, which won the BioServices Company of the Year Award, Mr Hemant Rehani, head of clinical practice, and Ms Sudha Kanago, head of global functioning resourcing practice, jointly received the award. It was given away by Mr N Suresh, group editor, BioSpectrum.

Mr Govind Rao, vice president, BioIT, Ocimum Biosolutions, received the BioInformatics Company of the Year Award from Dr S D Ravetkar, senior director, Serum Institute of India, Pune.

Dr P Sateesh Kumar, director of Research, Nuziveedu Seeds, received the BioAgriculture Company of the Year Award 2011 from Prof P K Khosla, vice-chancellor of Shoolini University in Solan, Himachal Pradesh.

Dr Lalji Singh, vice chancellor, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), gave away the award for the Best Public Biotech School and the Best Private Biotech School to Dr G D Yadav, vice chancellor of Institute of Chemical Technology, and Dr Swaminathan Sethuraman, director of SASTRA's Nanotechnology and Advanced Materials Center, respectively.

Speaking on the importance of a strong pipeline of entrepreneurs, Mr Pradeep Gupta, chairman of CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum and one of the founding members of the Indian Angel Network, which helps budding entrepreneurs, said, "There is less investment in the biotech industry. The need of the hour is mentoring of start-ups in the industry." He also rued that there were very few special interest groups in biotech.

Dr Ravi Dhar, senior consultant of Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAP), shared the council's future plans to put biotech industry on a sustainable growth path. BIRAP is a program initiated by the Department of Biotechnology, in partnership with ABLE and Biotech Consortium India Limited, with an objective to assist and promote emerging biotech entrepreneurs and facilitate innovative R&D in existing small, medium as well as large industries, which has got government's approval to be converted into a corporate entity.

Ms Deepanwita Chattopadhyay, CEO and managing director, IKP Knowledge Park, and a member of the 10-member jury committee that selected this year's awardees shared the details of the awards selection process with the audience.

A special category award created for the first time for public private partnership excellence in the biotech field was jointly received by Dr M Z Abidin, dean of the faculty of sciences, Hamdard University, and Dr D C Jain, GM, IPCA Labs.

Dr Rajesh Jain, joint MD, Panacea Biotec, accepting the Product Of The Year Award for PacliALL, a breast cancer drug, called it "the first example of affordable innovative product in India". Mr Supreet Deshpande, CEO, VLife Sciences, the recipient of the Entrepreneur of the Year Award termed the award to be like "a booster dose to help do much more". Appreciating his team's efforts, he said, "A captain can only be as good as the team".

Dr Virander Chauhan, director, International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), shared a light moment with the audience by comparing himself and Dr Chetan Chitnis, principal investigator-Malaria Research Group, ICGEB, with the yesteryear cricketer Chetan Chauhan who inspite of taking all the battering from the Australian bowlers went unrecognized. Both Dr Chitnis and Dr Chauhan received the Person Of The Year Award from Mr Hans Guenter Loeffler, deputy consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bangalore. Throwing light on the status of the malaria vaccine, Dr Chitnis said, "The phase I trial is done. We will make this vaccine a reality."

The crowning moment of the evening was the presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award to the father of DNA fingerprinting in India, Dr Lalji Singh, vice-chancellor of Banaras Hindu University. Receiving the award from Mr Pradeep Gupta, he said, "This is the first time that I am receiving an award for the work which, till now, has only brought me summons or arrest warrants." He narrated some amusing anecdotes about the appearances he had to make in courts in various parts of the country to present evidence based on DNA fingerprinting techniques. His book, My Travails In The Witness Box, will be released soon.

Ms Nandita Singh, editor, BioSpectrum, delivered the closing remarks to the ceremony which saw key persons representing a broad spectrum of the life sciences industry coming together to applaud and appreciate excellence.

Uma Kelath in Bangalore

Why should society support biotech?

Suresh	Mr N Suresh, group editor, BioSpectrum, kick-started the discussion with a comment on how negative publicity has affected the industry. "Of late biotechnology is in the news only for the wrong reasons. The public gets to hear only about Bt brinjal-related controversies and illegal clinical research organizations. There is a need to create a brand BT in order for it to truly reach the masses," he said.
Sdravetkar	Dr S D Ravetkar, senior director, Serum Institute of India, called for emulating the principles of the IT industry. "We should follow the IT industry by taking biotechnology to the schools, the way computers have become an integral part of schools. We need to ensure that children understand how much impact biotechnology has already made in our lives and how it continues to do so," he commented.
Vijaychandru	Dr Vijay Chandru, president, ABLE, and CEO, Strand Life Sciences, said, "Hitherto, there has been no technology in history such as biotechnology that has had the potential to address issues ranging from food security to medicine. In order to help the public realise the importance of biotech, research should be directed towards a particular goal, which is deliverable to the public. We need to be involved in research from which we can derive value."
Rajeshjain	Dr Rajesh Jain, joint MD, Panacea Biotech, emphasized the need for intelligent marketing of biotechnology. "Life-saving vaccines are among the greatest contributions of the biotechnology industry. The public is aware of such contributions, but biotechnology has taken a beating in the last few years due to controversies. To counter this, we need a marketing strategy, which is both aggressive and creative, to help people understand biotechnology," he pointed out.
Bvrvikumar	Dr B V Ravi Kumar, MD, XCyton Diagnostics, had an interesting view on making the public more aware of biotechnology. "Most of healthcare in biotechnology is perceived to be a part of the pharmaceutical industry. Similarly, a lot of agricultural biotech is considered to be a part of agricultural sciences. The need of the hour is a sustained campaign to educate the masses about what biotechnology is all about," he said.
Gdyadav	Dr G D Yadav, vice-chancellor, Institute of Chemical Technology, emphasized the need to include principles of biology in engineering courses for people to grasp its underlying concepts. Echoing these sentiments, other academicians also spoke of the need to improve the industry-academia relations to produce a comprehensive work force for the biotechnology industry.
Pradeepgupta	Presenting an entrepreneur's view, Mr Pradeep Gupta, chairman and managing director of CyberMedia group and promoter of BioSpectrum, said, "There is a need to bring the business of biotechnology closer to the consumer. We need to think in an oblique manner and try to present it in a format, which can appeal to the public."
Kknarayanan1	Dr K K Narayanan, MD, Metahelix, said biotechnology has touched the lives of millions of farmers through Bt cotton. He aptly summed up the discussion when he said, "Biotechnology is a multi-faceted field, because of which there is a strong need for people to unite across the different sectors. Industries across verticals of pharma, agriculture and bioinformatics should present a united front in the times of crisis. These actions will go a long way in presenting to the public a positive outlook for biotechnology."

Manasi Vaidya in Bangalore