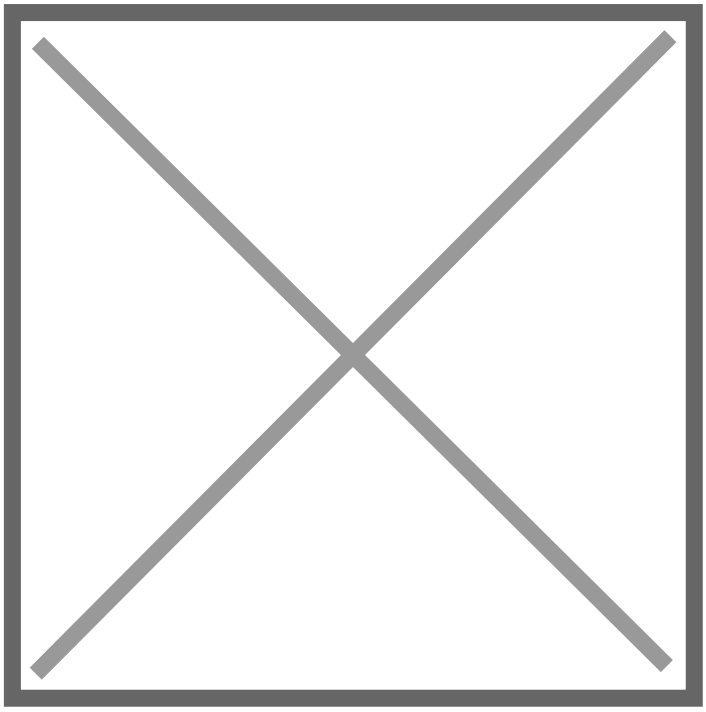
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ABLE, AIBA - A Win-Win

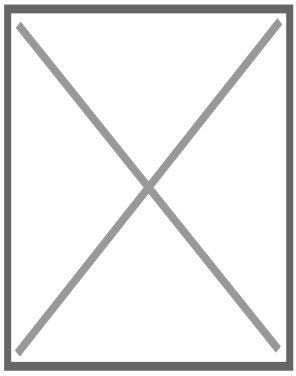
12 April 2004 | News



The biotech industry in India has two associations, popular as ABLE and AIBA. ABLE was formed last year. BioSpectrum sought the views of both these institutions on their growth plans and a score sheet of the past 12 months. This is not ABLE versus AIBA.

The Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) was launched in April 2003. Before that
All India Biotech Association (AIBA) was the only association championing the cause of the biotech industry. AIBA has been there since 1994. Any association representative of the industry, should involve the larger players, needs funds, should be close to the government and have a committed leader. Is it not the time to take stock of what the duo achieved during the past fiscal?

ABLE



When Nitin Deshmukh took over as the first director-general of ABLE he had set for himself a few priorities. Formation of an executive council and work as a policy group to interact and partner with the government and policy makers to determine policies that would help the growth of the industry. The priority was to address issues like the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), regulatory affairs and encourage investments.

Informed Deshmukh, "Since June things started picking up. The executive council and Special Interest Groups (SIG) got set up. There has been active participation in our various SIG groups. These SIG groups cover pharma biotech, agri biotech, industrial biotech, research services, bioIT, IPR regulatory, policy and strategy subjects. Further, the most important thing that we have achieved is the mapping of the Indian biotech industry in association with BioSpectrum. There were all sorts of numbers floating but this exercise was able to give us more authentic size of the industry."

The biggest challenge for any new outfit is getting members and active participation. The association had set a target of having at least 75 percent of the biotech companies in the country on board by March 2004. And ABLE has successfully managed to rope in 120 members.

During the year, it launched on this exercise. "We wanted the members to derive real benefits. As part of that we felt that a website initiative will be the right vehicle. We did this and today our site is a good source of information and interaction. Besides, we focused on creating more visibility for the companies, facilitating the meetings between the trade commissions and member companies, working closely with bio associations, and do relevant seminars. The global biopartnering summit with Frost & Sullivan, IPR and R&D seminars with ASSOCHAM, etc. have been among some of the programs that we did,"

elaborated Deshmukh. Also the association has made presentations on the Indian biotech scenario at various forums like the AsiaBiotech conference, Chile forum, and Deshmukh was in Japan for another forum in March.

ABLE's Objectives

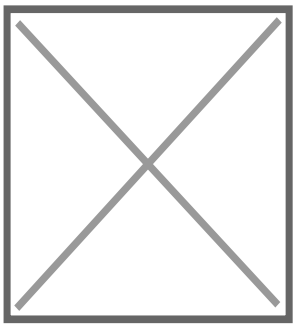
- Accelerating the pace of biotechnology in India by enabling strategic alliances between researchers, the government, and the global biotech industry.
- Showcasing breakthrough technologies and cutting-edge Biotech initiatives that will take the Indian Biotech sector to new heights.
- Partnering and acting as a consulting body to the government in its Biotech endeavor as well as lobbying for conducive policy making.
- Promoting Biotechnology in both industry and academia, and forging a stronger link between research and the commercialization of emerging technologies.
- Encouraging global investment in India's rapidly expanding Biotechnology sector, facilitating proactive collaborations and partnerships.
- Representing the interests of the Biotech sector with government and policy makers as well as with universities, scientific and corporate entities, and the global Biotech industry.
- Inducting bodies that represent Indian industry like the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), as well as various other national and international organizations as Affiliate Members.
- Recommending reforms, and initiating dialogue through seminars, workshops, conferences and other forums between society, entrepreneurs and scientists.
- Presenting and disseminating the state-of-the-art information regarding the industry to lawmakers, investors, academicians, and the media.

Amongst the specific things that ABLE achieved was coming out with a policy paper on regulatory and IPR/Patent Amendment issues. "Besides mapping the industry, we also came up with a five year biometrics. That is to build a $5 billion biotechnology business segment in India; provide employment to 1 million scientists and engineers; build a $1 billion business segment for research process outsourcing; Build world class clinical capabilities and generate $1.5 billion revenues through clinical trials; attract $2 billion investment in the biotechnology sector; and be amongst the top three countries in agri-biotech and amongst the top five countries in health science-biotech," added Deshmukh.

ABLE has been working closely with the industry and the government trying to figure out the key growth drivers that will take the industry to reach the numbers. It has made some progress on catalyzing the need to address the regulatory, IPR and data exclusivity issues. Further it is working towards mobilizing investments in the sector. "We want to have proactive governments both at the center and the states and catalyze infrastructure creation. We have already put up the case for an urgent need of Rs 200 crore biotech fund," informed Deshmukh. Jointly with CII, ABLE has made a presentation to Murali Manohar Joshi, union minister for human resources and development.

This year ABLE would be coming out with the report on competitiveness of Indian biotech industry in association with Frost & Sullivan. Also it plans to work closely with leading consultants to prepare a paper on the investment and incentives that can work for the Indian biotech sector. It has already come up with a code of conduct for member organizations and plans to get increasing acceptance of the same. Going by what ABLE had set out to do, the association is all set to consolidate further on its objectives in the second year of its operations.

AIBA



Vivek Singhal, president of All India Biotech Association (AIBA) and president of Biotech International Ltd is keen on attracting the small-scale industries in this sector. "It is very important for any business sector to take small and medium players along with its growth. But so far in biotech we are yet to explore dimensions for SMEs. By attracting small and medium players into biotech industry in India, we could make this sector a real boom." AIBA, focused mainly on SMEs, has close to 100 companies and institutions as its members.

Singhal also discussed various other areas within the biotech bay that are still untouched. "There are so many areas that we need to concentrate seriously. Among such areas, agriculture biotechnology holds a promising opportunity. Then we have lot of potential in organic farming. Contract jobs or services also have a good future. Pharma is also a high potential area for biotech industry, but this area requires high investment."

Strongly suggesting an area that biotech community needs to carefully look at, Singhal said, "We have to create an active forum from where the awareness about biotech opportunities can be spread among its concerned stakeholders. Through AIBA we are aggressively poised to organize seminars or forums for biotech community on regular intervals." Moreover, he emphasized the importance of interactive gathering of biotech community.

AIBA's Objectives

- To promote and safeguard the overall interests of Biotechnology as a science, profession, industry or trade.
- To collect and obtain all information on matters affecting the members, make representations to the various authorities, and to appear before any Authority in the interest and betterment of the constituent members for carrying any activity relating to biotechnology.
- To cooperate with other individuals, associations, groups and bodies within the country and abroad having similar aims and objects.
- To subscribe and promote the aims and objects of any society or an Association having similar objects to all or any of the objects of the Association and to encourage and support any Association or Government Policy for the improvement of laws relating to Biotechnology.
- To coordinate and assist the research, professional, manufacturing and export promotion activities of its constituent members.
- To sponsor study and business teams abroad and to invite individuals, exports and scientists and similar delegations from abroad with the approval of concerned authorities.
- To sponsor and undertake research, commodity and market surveys and collect and disseminate statistics and information and initiate necessary action therewith.
- To prepare, print and publish papers, periodicals or reports and to organize lectures, conferences and seminars and promote exhibitions, shows and other activities with a view to extending knowledge and information or seeking reorientation of Government policy in relation to Biotechnology as research, industrial, professional or trading activity.
- To provide facilities for settlement of disputes within the Association objectives and to support and/or oppose and take necessary all and every action including legal recourse to represent, defend and support/oppose any such move, legislation, taxation or other concerned measure, imposition or enactment for the protection of legitimate rights, interests and work of the Association.
- To advice or to represent to the Central and state Governments, local public bodies on all matters relating to biotechnology.
- To grant awards to persons and institutions for outstanding contributions in the furtherance of objectives of the society.

Apart from this, AIBA has recently initiated the plans to launch a Biotech export forum for helping small players to expand their dimensions to the global scenario. "Through this forum we would arrange financial assistance for those who want to explore the global biotech market. Biotech Export Forum will encourage those entrepreneurs who want to attend any international biotech event. For example, BIO is a big event in the biotech industry, but only a few Indian biotech companies can afford to attend this event. This forum will try to assist entrepreneurs to attend this by arranging funds for their visit. We have plans to sponsor up to 60 percent of the total expenditure for such a visit," Singhal stated. AIBA is asking the government to raise Rs 1 crore as corpus money for this fund.

The association is active in building the biotech awareness and creating data bank that would be useful for the members. "AIBA is bringing out a bi-monthly news letter since 1995. This is to spread awareness among the stakeholders. Information is vital for updating any business. This newsletter is acting as a important news source for its readers," informed Singhal.

Elaborating on AIBA's initiatives last year, Singhal highlighted that the association successfully organized an International Conference on Emerging Trends in Biotechnology. The conference focused on "Stem Cells-Technology, Potential & Trends". In Feb 2003, AIBA organized Biotech Invest-2003, a global meet on strategic alliances and business opportunities.

Apart from this, in January 2003 AIBA organized AIBA Awards-2001-02. "Now we have started our work for AIBA Awards 2003-04. Scientists and individual entrepreneurs have started sending their profiles for this year's award," Singhal informed. The most recent achievement for AIBA has been BioAsia 2004. AIBA partnered with the Andhra Pradesh Government (Genome Valley) in organizing the event.

Ch. Srinivas Rao & Faiz Askari
in New Delhi