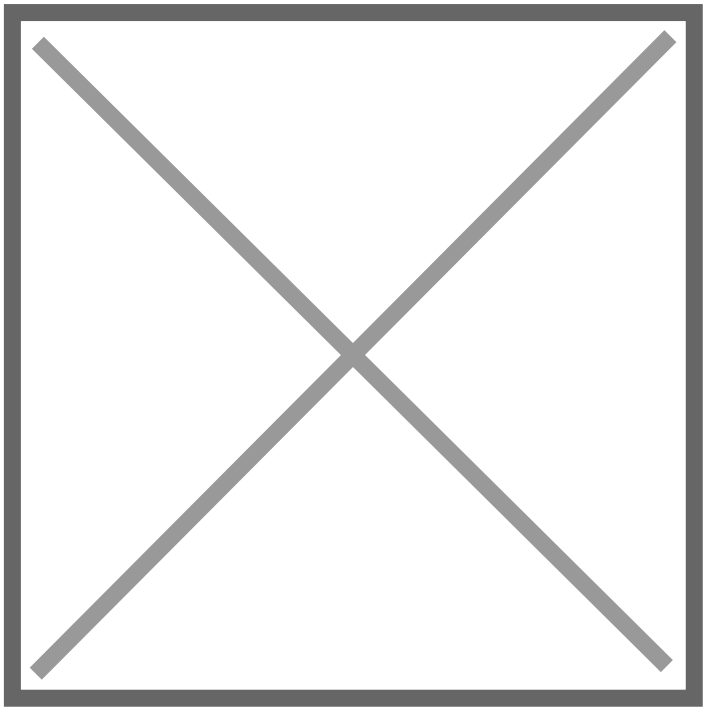
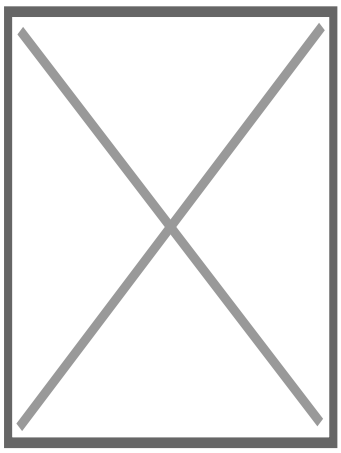
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DBT's Industry Handshake

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DBT's Industry Handshake



November seems to be a very active month for the government's Department of Biotechnology (DBT). A year ago, in November, the New Biotechnology Policy, called the National Biotechnology Development Strategy (NBDS), which was in the works since 2004 was unveiled to great acclaim. A year later, DBT has launched another highly industry-friendly initiative, the Rs 350 crore ($ 70 million) Biotechnology Industry Partnership Programme (BIPP).

This was one of the highlights of the biotech policy and by a remarkable coincidence, BIPP too got the formal federal cabinet approval on November 8, 2009, a year after the unveiling of the policy. DBT secretary, Dr M K Bhan and his team deserves the industry's accolades for putting together a great initiative which will help the sector in the long run.

There have been several consultations during the formulation phase of BIPP. And I understand from DBT that this will continue in the future too. Initially, BIPP will be run as a pilot project for two years and scaled up with additional resources after a thorough evaluation. A notable feature of BIPP is that the operations of the scheme will be handled by an industry veteran who will be assisted by a senior technocrat from DBT. So BIPP is as much a biotech industry scheme as that of the government.

The highlights of the BIPP scheme are available in this issue of BioSpectrum. The funds will be available to companies to take up really innovative research programs and the government, for the first time, will assume all the risks associated with it. The

rewards will belong to the innovator/entrepreneur with a small royalty going back to the government to shore up the finances for further extension of the scheme. It is a win-win for all. BIPP is also part of DBT's public announcement to allocate 30 percent of its budget allocations to the industry in the next five years. It is now up to biotech innovators to make full use of the program and certainly budding entrepreneurs with good ideas will not have too many complaints if all works well.

December is also the time for the annual awards and the results of the 6th BioSpectrum Awards are available in this issue. As it has been happening since the launch in 2003, the BioSpectrum Awards jury has the tough task of choosing the awardees. For in a dynamic, growing sector there are too many contender for the few awards and the jury, chaired by the BioSpectrum Person of the Year 2007, Varaprasad Reddy, has completed the delicate task successfully.

Prof G Padmanaban, the legendary former director of IISc, Bangalore and the scientist's scientist, is being honored with the Life Time Achievement Award. The music world's loss has been biotechnology's gain for GP, as he is popularly called, chose a biotech career over that of a professional classical singer. The BioSpectrum Person of the Year is CSIR chief, Dr Samir Brahmachari. He has been chosen for his action-packed one year since assuming the role of CSIR chief for three undisputed, path-breaking initiatives-the Indian Genome Map, the Open Source Drug Discovery Programme and for bringing the prestigious Human Genome Organization (HUGO) meeting to India for the first time, in 2008.

The BioSpectrum Entrepreneur of the Year is Ocimum Biosolution's Anuradha Acharya, the young, first generation entrepreneur who has used her information technology background to start a remarkable biotech company, which straddles several segments in this sector. The BioSpectrum Product of the Year award has been given to two products-XCyto Screen technology platform from XCyton Diagnostics of Dr B V Ravikumar, and Reditux, a biosimilar anti-cancer drug from Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hyderabad. Both these products serve the social purpose of providing affordable medical care to millions of Indians.

The awards will be presented in Bangalore on December 12. See you all there.