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'We moulded our policy very much in tune with the National Biotech policy'

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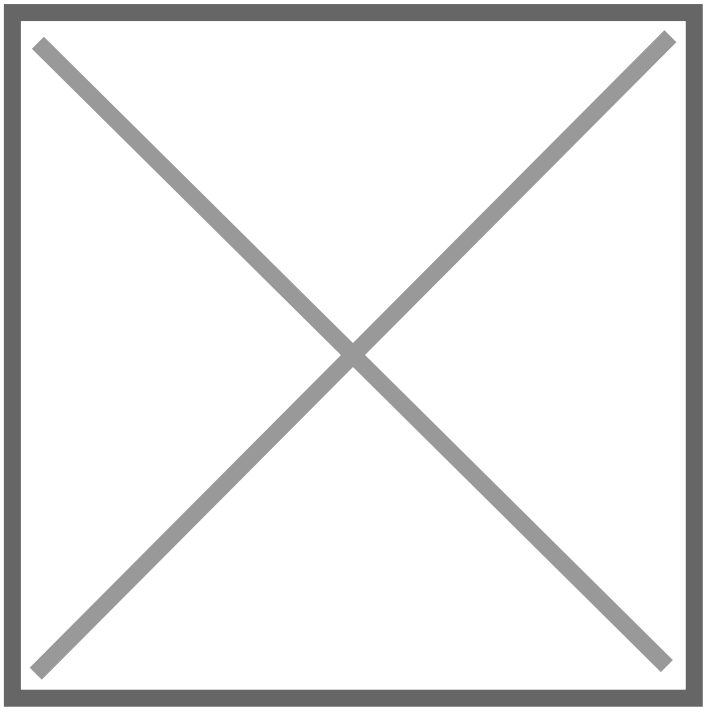

BT Parks - West

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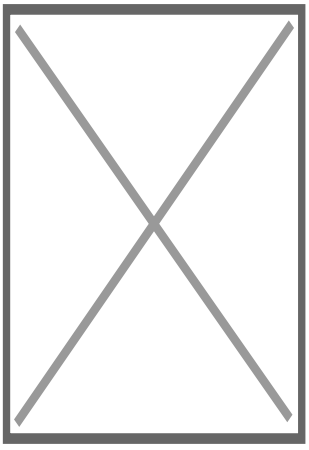

-Akshay Kumar Saxena, mission director, GSBTM

Gujarat's biotech policy which comes under the state's industrial policy, gives as much room as possible to encourage entrepreneurship, not just among big names but also small time local players. Akshay Kumar Saxena, Mission Director, GSBTM in an interview with Biospectrum discusses about the State's policy framework and its biotech dreams. Excerpts:

What are the latest developments in the Gujarat Biotech Policy at present?

The Gujarat Biotech policy derives its existence from the Industrial policy 2003 wherein most of the benefits available to the normal industry become available to the biotech industry as well. The state government is now revising the entire industrial policy 2003 and the exercise is still on. We intend to come out with it before 'Vibrant Gujarat' happening in January 2009. They intend to restructure the schemes, which were already there, and the entire set of clauses which addresses the infrastructure development, critical infrastructure, R&D and financing. For the reviewing the Industrial policy there is already a governing body at the state level appointed

Why is the biotech policy not segregated as a separate entity altogether?

The policy is separate but it clearly mentions that the benefits to biotech companies come from the industrial policy provided by the state government. If we had provided a separate Bt Policy then the benefits, provided by the Industrial policy would not have been applicable to the Bt policy. The Bt policy has borrowed most of its strength from the industrial policy. The state government was thinking that both in terms of normal benefits, implementation mechanisms and structure there should be least duplication. If there is something additional then it comes under the Bt Policy. The Bt Policy here divides the state into different zones like for example the Marine Biotech, Agri-biotech and within that we have the Bt parks.

In such a scenario is there any separate body or mechanism to monitor the biotech activities in the state?

When you are talking about a body, the BT body already existed before GSBTM already came into existence. There is no separate body now but we are creating a body within ourselves, which can act as a facilitating role in the industry. There is no duplication. The only thing that differentiates this policy is that we have come up with a certification system. Bt companies have has to be certified within the system which will make them entitled for seeking benefits.

What about Funding?

We have come up with the Gujarat Biotech Venture fund to encourage entrepreneurship. It is a Rs 50 crore venture fund of which the state government has contributed Rs 10 crore. At present, we are running the fourth venture fund. Now three projects have been approved and 2 or 3 are in the advanced stages of processing

And we have planned it out in such a way that if a person gets a venture fund for a project can go one step further and go to SBRI. So we are providing that link and probably we will be providing another Rs 15 crore.

Apart from this fund, if a private developer wants to develop a park, he gets a maximum amount of Rs 5 crore of funding. There is also a scheme of critical infrastructure made by industry department, schemes for environment management. Then there are schemes for patent filing, the technology development fund which is being revised.

How will the Gujarat government be working in synergy with the National Biotech Policy?

When we were developing our own strategy back in 2005, at the same time the National Biotech policy was also taking it shape. We thereby created a policy and also a policy strategic action plan. So we moulded our policy very much in tune with the National Biotech policy. So if there is an institutional requirement, which is a state priority and if it happens to be mentioned in the National Biotech policy as well as our state policy and strategic plan that is when we will work in tune with the National Policy.