

Will political parties pay heed?

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In the previous issue, we did a special story on the industry's expectations from the next government at the centre and also the missing bioscience agenda on political landscape. Following that, we sent the print and e-copies of the story to the manifesto committees of the major political parties. Although we didn't elicit any direct response from them, we did receive oral assurances from the few representatives.

The main purpose behind the entire exercise was to generate awareness about the aims and aspirations of the industry and its associations. The key highlight that emerged out of it was the decisiveness with which the next government will act on the pending regulatory issues and promotion of the sector. The experts were unanimous in one voice that they want the political diaspora to understand the needs of the biotech industry to ensure the best outcomes especially in healthcare and agriculture.

Given the fact that it is completely different from other sectors due to its direct effect on the wellbeing and livelihood of the common people, many associations felt that the government must offer the exemption from excise or custom duties on life saving medicines as well as on their raw materials and also on capital goods and consumables. The complex regulatory scenario and prevailing confusion has added to the woes of experts who have to always run from pillar to post for seeking clearances. No doubt ensuring the safety and well-being of people is supreme but that has to be based on logic and not unfounded emotional misconceptions.

There have been individual government agencies and officials who have indeed worked tirelessly to promote the sector. However, the lack of coordination and unanimity on key issues within the outgoing government came as great disappointment for them.

While at the moment, we are not sure about the political party forming the next government at the centre but we are confident

that the political ideology will guide most of the decisions. The public perception surely is important for any democratic government but so is the long term vision for their betterment. And unfortunately the lack of enough knowledge about this industry in the general public has become a negative factor. Perhaps the industry requires to establish a direct connect and open a dialogue with the common masses. The mobilization of strong public opinion can surely force any political party to make amends to the rigidity of few outdated principles.

As one of the political analysts had pointed out, the political parties will keep following populist themes and if you have to make them see your point, you have to make it positively popular. The message has been delivered and now is the time to wait and watch. As the nation awaits the next dispensation to take over the reins, the industry too will curiously look on for the recognition and special attention.