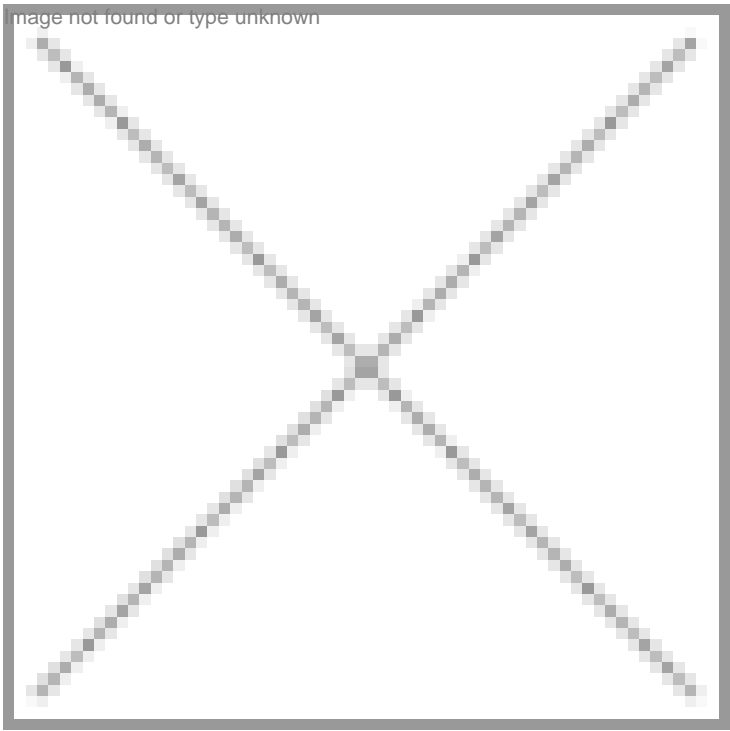


Mukesh Ambani to lead Reliance Life Sciences

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Mukesh Ambani, CMD, Reliance Industry Ltd, who has been leading the Reliance Life Sciences (RLS) initiative since 2001, will continue to drive it post the new alignment of businesses at Reliance Group.

June 18 was a day of rejoice for over three million shareholders of the Reliance Group. On the day Kokilaben Ambani, wife of late Dhirubhai Ambani, founder chairman of Reliance Industries, one of the leading business conglomerates in India with total turnover of Rs 73,164 crore for the year ending March 31, 2005 amicably resolved the seven-month ownership feud between her two sons Mukesh and Anil by issuing a statement. As per the settlement formula, Mukesh got complete control over the oil refining and gas firm Reliance Industries and the petrochemicals business Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL). Anil, on the other hand, would manage the power utility Reliance Energy, the finance firm Reliance Capital and telecom services major Reliance Infocomm.

However Kokilaben's statement contained no information of the some of the other group companies including Reliance Life Sciences Pvt Ltd, the biotechnology venture of the Reliance Group which is still in the process of profit making. When contacted, Reliance spokesperson confirmed that Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director of Reliance Industry Ltd who has been driving and guiding the Reliance Life Sciences since 2001, still holds the control on the life sciences initiative of the Group.

A new beginning

The Reliance Group saw a major opportunity emerging in the field of biotechnology in the 21st century. This motivated the creation of RLS with an investment of \$5 million in the cell biology facility in 2001 as a new millennium initiative of the

Reliance Group.

At RLS the embryonic stem cell work was started in April 2001 as per the guidelines of the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institutes of Health, USA. The embryonic stem cell group is also focusing on basic research such as gene discovery, drug discovery and establishment of several transformed cell lines. The RLS's cell biology research activities are being carried out at Sir Harkishandas Nurrotumdas Hospital in Mumbai and Reliance had pumped in Rs 100 crore for its upgradation in 1997.

Reliance Life Sciences joined hands with Thyrocare Technologies, the world's largest thyroid testing laboratory to offer DNA technology-based genetic testing services across the country. It has created a comprehensive Genetic Center as part of its cell biology group. The Reliance Group will be investing about \$25 million in cell biology research that focuses on stem cells and tissue engineering. This covers embryonic stem cells, haematopoietic stem cells, skin cells, tissue engineering, genetics and molecular diagnostics.

Reliance Life Sciences, a closely held company, is now in the process of setting up its Cord Blood Repository (CBR) and plans to grow the repository to around 30,000 units over the next two-three years. The CBR is part of the cell biology group and has to date, collected, tested and stored the cord blood. The stem cell-enriched CBR initiative of RLS is an investment for the future. The RLS is expected to complete the HLA (Human Leukocyte Antigen) typing of the blood in the next eight months and would be followed by animal testing and matching of donor-receiver.

The RLS will soon move out of its makeshift base from the city hospital to its own campus in Navi Mumbai, with an eye on scaling up- the critical mass being 10,000 stem cell units before the company can join a global network of cord blood repositories. Kvaerner, the international Engineering and Construction Group, based in the US has already been developing the life sciences complex for Reliance since 2002. The RLS campus, which is a fast track project, will include R&D laboratories, a cGMP pilot plant, animal environments and a green house. It has developed specific target oriented, efficient screen systems-both biological as well as chemicals to aim at lead optimization through iterative medicinal and automated synthetic methods.

Besides stem cell research, Reliance Life Sciences is developing business opportunities in the domains of medical biotechnology, plant biotechnology, industrial biotechnology, contract research and clinical trials. RLS' facility at Jamnagar primarily focuses on plant biotechnology projects where modern farming methods are being tried in arid areas. In addition to this, Jamnagar also has facilities for carrying out industrial biotechnology research by addressing the biopolymers, biofuels and bioprocess development opportunities.

Reliance Life Sciences that filed about nine patents in India, according to a study done by the Patent Facility Centre (PFC), under the Technology Information Forecasting and Assessment Council, has been offering few products and services in both medical and plant biotechnology space. Besides RLS offers services in molecular diagnostics and genetic testing under Relix brand to institutions and doctors. But its products are still to make headway in the market and earn profits. One has to wait and watch how this new millennium initiative of the Reliance Group will bring cheer among its shareholders by adding value to their shares.