

Biotech Parks of India

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There are already over five parks in the country to house biotech and life sciences companies and another five are expected to come up in the next couple of years.

With biotechnology industry registering over 35 percent growth in the last few years, this industry is seen as one of the key attributes that will contribute to the socio-economic growth of the state. So several states are making conscious efforts to create a conducive environment to attract entrepreneurs to set up their units and leverage on the vast talent pool and rich biodiversities in the respective states. Even the Government of India has been supporting this industry since 1986 by establishing a strong network of research institutes and developing academic institutes to fulfill the human resources requirement.

Karnataka was the first state in the country to announce a "millennium" biotechnology policy as early as 2001 to promote this sunrise industry. And Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh followed it with their own biotechnology policies during the year. Later other states like Haryana (2002), Punjab, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh (2003), and Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan (2004) joined the bandwagon by announcing their respective state policies. The latest to announce the policy initiatives was Gujarat. These announcements have given a push to the development and promotion of biotechnology in the states. One of the salient features of these biotech policies is setting up of dedicated biotech parks. Today there are about half-a-dozen biotech parks in the country and several more are expected to come up in the next two-three years.

Shapoorji Pallonji Biotech Park

Though Karnataka was the first to announce a Biotech plan for the state, it was Andhra Pradesh, which seized the opportunity. The Andhra Pradesh government was able to put its act together to identify and develop the facilities for biotech entrepreneurs. It entered into a public-private partnership with Shapoorji Pallonji & Co Ltd with 11 percent equity stake and incorporated Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Biotech Park Pvt Ltd (SP Biotech Park) for developing and managing the Park at Shamirpet, near Hyderabad.

The Park has entered into the second phase of development. The first phase of the park comprised 140 acres of space. About 17 companies have already taken the position and have set up their units at the Park making an investment of about Rs 400 crore. "We are now developing the layout of Phase II of the Park which is 162 acres and the bookings are expected to be over by the end of this year," said S Dhawan, chief executive, Shapoorji Pallonji Biotech Park Pvt Ltd. Considering the demand, Shapoorji Pallonji & Co. has approached the state government for more space for expansion of the park. It is expected to get an additional 100 acres of land for expansion of the biotech park in the third phase. "Another 101 acres is being allotted to start the third phase of the Shapoorji Pallonji Biotech Park and 100 acres for the Rs 125 crore National Animal Resource facility," informed Dr A Ashok, director of biotechnology, Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Besides, the Andhra government has set up a Marine Biotech Park on a 218-acre site at Parwada near Visakhapatnam. The park set up in association with the Andhra University would also house a marine biotech complex and focus on marine resources, apart from research on marine foods, nutraceuticals and fisheries. Biogenus and Celgen have already been allotted the required land at the park. The government has been receiving enquiries with more companies showing interest to take up ventures in the Marine Biotech Park at Visakhapatnam.

In addition to marine and pharma biotechnology, the government has earmarked an area of 200 acres for Agri Science Park at the campus of International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and a MoU was signed in 2003 between the government of Andhra Pradesh and the director general of ICRISAT. The Park comprises an Agribiotech Park, Agri Business Incubator, a Hybrid Seeds Consortium, and SAT Ecoventure. Three ventures have come up in the Agri-Biotech Park. Amongst them is a facility for testing aflatoxin contamination in food crops. The two other collaborations are with Avesthagen and the Suri Sehgal Foundation. Four companies have joined the Agri-Business Incubator to incubate technologies. These being Rusni Distilleries for the production of ethanol from sweet sorghum; Bioseed Research Ltd. for the development of transgenic cotton; Seed Works Ltd. for the development of transgenic cotton and vegetables; and Sessler Tom and Hyglass for the development of fermentor and agricultural implements.

ICICI Knowledge Park

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has one more park - ICICI Knowledge Park - to its credit in the knowledge intensive field. Launched by ICICI Bank Ltd in partnership with the state government, the park is focused on facilitating business-driven research and development. The park is spread over 200 acres of campus at Turkapally near Hyderabad. The project is being

developed in phases. With full occupancy in the first two phases, the ICICI Knowledge Park is in the process of developing the third phase with an investment of Rs 7 crore to create 22,000 sq ft infrastructure to accommodate 13 laboratories. Already about Rs 42 crore has been invested in setting up the first two phases of the park.

As many as 13 companies are operating from this park that offers land plots of varying dimensions to build research centers and pilot plants as per specific requirements of the resident companies. While the park encourages research and development in all knowledge intensive fields, the current focus of the park is in the areas of biotechnology, pharmaceuticals technology, specialty chemicals, new materials, information technology and telecommunications. The park offers fully air-conditioned modular laboratory units with standard facilities and services for establishing state-of-the-art research centers for conducting advanced scientific research.

International Biotech Park

Similarly the Maharashtra government too adopted a public-private partnership model for developing the biotech park in the state. International Biotech Park (IBP) is a joint venture project between the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) and TCG Urban Infrastructure Holding Ltd (TCGUIH), a Chatterjee Group company. With a total investment of Rs 250 crore in the project, MIDC will hold approximately 12 percent of the paid-up capital while TCGUIH will hold the remaining 88 percent. TCGUIH develops, promotes and markets the 110- acre park at Hinjewadi, near Pune. "Now we have about 10 companies and research organizations who have booked space at the park and will start setting up their units in a month's time," informed Bamasish Paul, head of strategic planning and business development, TCG Urban Infrastructure Holdings Ltd. Emcure Pharma and Shreya Biotech have already started operating their activities from the park.

Lucknow Biotech Park

Though Uttar Pradesh started a little late, it is aggressively developing its biotech park in Lucknow in association with Department of Biotechnology on an eight-acre land. The Lucknow Biotech Park is being set up in collaboration with the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, New Delhi, universities and industries.

Already a few organizations, both domestic and international, have booked space at the park in Lucknow. Shantha Biotechnics, Biotechnology Consulting Research Inc., IQRA Biotech Services - Neurosciences & Physiotherapy Centre, Clintech Research LLC, New Jersey, Green Path Bio Herbs Industries, and Software Technology Park of India (STPI) have been leased space at the Biotech Park. Besides, Bio Alliance, Germany is interested in a joint venture in the broad field of biotechnology, R&D and training. Odyssey Research Inc. and Acrossworld have expressed their plans for operations in India. The Lucknow Biotech Park has already supplied more than 125,000 fully hardened banana plants to the State Horticulture Board. The park in collaboration with NBRI, Lucknow is raising elite quality of Jatropa Curcas plants and so far about 150, 000 plants have been delivered to the State Farm Corporation India Ltd at cost of Rs 18 lakh. The state is also seriously considering the possibility of cultivating jatropa on 20 lakh hectares of wasteland to produce biofuel and is planning to come out with a biofuel policy to encourage entrepreneurs and farmers. Dr PK Seth, CEO, Biotech Park, said, "Lucknow offers business in biopharma, bioagriculture, bioinformatics and bioservices."

Ticel Bio Park

Opened in November last year, Ticel Bio Park offers developed space for entrepreneurs to set up research units, and common facilities for testing and analysis. Located near the TIDEL Park at Taramani near Chennai, this park was promoted by the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco) on a five-acre land, provided by the state government. It has technical collaboration from Cornell University of New York and financial assistance from a few banks. The facilities at the park were developed at a cost of Rs 62.50 crore. The park already has three occupants, Vimta-Molecular Biology Labs, SGS Life Sciences Service and Frontier Life Line Pvt Ltd. The management expects full occupancy in the next couple of years.

Besides, Chennai has Golden Jubilee Biotech Park for Women Society, with the aim of providing opportunities to prospective women entrepreneurs in the field of biotechnology. This is the only and the first biotech park in India exclusively for women entrepreneurs, which was commercialized in May 2001. It offers centralized support services to a series of biotechnology-based activities by women.

Already 13 women entrepreneurs have set up units in this park in different areas of biotechnology. The Government of Tamil Nadu has extended support to the establishment of the first women's biotech park in the country by allotting 20 acres of land at Siruseri village near Chennai, inside SIPCOT-IT Park. The park has created a database of over 500 technologies or projects covering about 150 research institutions that can be commercialized in the park. Being located in a Notified Backward Area, all units in the park are eligible for capital subsidy from the Government of Tamil Nadu. Central Government subsidies are also available for specified industries.

These biotechnology parks are acting as bioclusters - where companies, universities and R&D institutes are all located in one place. The state governments too are supporting the industry players who are looking at setting up their units at the parks by offering incubation facilities, tax holidays and incentive package; venture funding initiatives etc. The technical alliance the parks' promoters have entered into, is also attracting entrepreneurs.

Considering all this, it is the natural and obvious choice of entrepreneurs to look at these parks for setting up their units.

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