

BioShakers - Padma Awards

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It rains Padma Awards on **Biotech Leaders**

Barely five years old, the biotechnology sector has been hovering over the fringes of the Indian industry so far. Not any more. It has been thrust to the forefront swiftly on January 26 when the nation celebrated the 55th Republic Day. The nation's highest civilian honors were bestowed on seven industry leaders and five of them happened to be the captains of biotech and life science companies. As the icing on the cake, two eminent personalities who have been great supporters of biotech too have been given the Padma awards.

the history of these coveted awards that a small section of the industry grabbed the entire limelight. A report from the heartland about the unprecedented show of nation's attention on the Rs 3,200 crore industry, all set to breach the mark this year.

Mohan Singh (Padma Vibhushan) founder of Ranbaxy) It is a proud moment for the biotech and life sciences industry. Out of the 96 Padma Awardees for this year, seven are business people-Dr Bhai Mohan Singh of Ranbaxy, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw of Biocon, Varaprasad Reddy of Shantha Biotechnics, Dr Yusuf Khamis Hamied of Cipla, Dr Cyrus Soli Poonawalla of Serum Institute of India, Azim Premji of Wipro and Dr Brijmohan Lal Munja of Hero. Out of these seven names, the first five have very strong roots in the life sciences industry, and the sixth awardee, Azim Premji of Wipro has some biotech connection through Wipro Life Sciences division.

3. Y K Hamied (Padma Bhushan- founder, Cipla) The profile of the biotech industry is further enriched with awards for Dr Martanda Varma Sankaran Valiathan (Padma Vibhushan) and Prof. V S Ramamurthy, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology (Padma Bhushan). Dr Valiathan is primarily a cardiac surgeon who received his surgical qualifications in the UK and cardiac surgery training at the Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Hospital in the US. He has pioneered biomedical research in India and is credited with the development of artificial heart valves-Chitra tilting disc valve (which is now commercially available)-blood bags, oxygenators, vascular grafts etc. He has published several research papers on endomyocardial fibrosis cardiac surgery, biomaterials and artificial internal organs, health and health policy. He undertook the monumental work to bring out the foundational text of Indian Medicine in Sanskrit-Charaka Samhita.

5. Varaprasad Reddy (Padma Bhushan, Shantha Biotechnics) And Prof. Ramamurthy is a major supporter of biotech by funding companies like Biocon, Shantha and Bharat Biotech through the Technology Development Board (TDB). It is not often that so many people in any one single field are recognized. This is an acknowledgement of the importance and impact of biotechnology. BioSpectrum and the industry congratulate each one of these winners, who have tirelessly contributed to the success of this industry in particular and society in general.

8. Cyrus S Poonawalla (Padma Shri- Serum Institute)