

## Rise and grab the big opportunity

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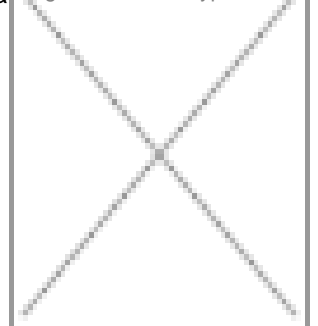
The chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Biotech Advisory Board, Dr D Balasubramanian is upbeat about BioAsia 2004. He advises the industry to grab the opportunity with both hands.

**Andhra Pradesh is being positioned and promoted as the vaccines hub. Do you think the state can live up to the expectations?**

We certainly have demonstrated our technical expertise in making vaccines and not just Hepatitis vaccine. We have three companies in Hyderabad itself which have done commendable work on vaccines. There are quite a number of vaccines that one can list such as the rabies vaccine with a DNA booster, then Rota Virus vaccine on which the work is on. The Indian vaccine companies are in growth mode while the MNCs are not even considering the opportunity in the infective diseases area. We are well placed to grab the opportunity and make the most of it.

**How do you see India vis-À-vis other competing locations in Asia, say Singapore which is pumping big money in its biotechnology industry?**

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Singapore is a small country and is certainly putting in big investments in hitech products in drugs, whereas we can do hitech as well as medium tech products. The market in India and South East Asia is huge and the technology is already there, for example in veterinary or health care products. We don't need to make huge investments in re-inventing anything. All that we need is to re-do the existing technology and just scale it up. This is the big opportunity that we need to grab with both hands.

**What are the steps the government should take at the policy level to promote the industry?**

The government can certainly go easy on licenses and clearances. In fact, it has been eased off to a certain extent in case of certain guidelines. We need to see less of government and more of private participation and academia. However, the government has to play the role of the watchdog and has to take lead in setting safety guidelines, ethics and good practices. We need to follow the model of West Europe and North America and have a single agency as regulatory body. Clarity and simplicity should be the basic plank of the government regulations.

**What are the new initiatives the government has taken that will bear good results or should take?**

There are two initiatives which will bring us great results. One, the CSIR industry-academia combine – New Millennium India Technology Leadership Initiative (NMITLI) from Indian laboratories. In a year or so we will have some interesting products in the area of bioinformatics and DNA biology. Two, in vaccines we need to develop not just prophylactic vaccines but also focus on therapeutic vaccines. In fact, I would say we should push a little harder and make a niche for ourselves in immuno boosters for various diseases. It will boost immunity and kill or at least combat some early stages of diseases such as HIV-AIDS.

**What are your expectations from Bio Asia?**

At the Bio Asia 2004 we expect good interaction between the government, industry and academia. It is this participation and B2B interaction which will lead us further. Then there are specific sessions on GMOs on how to successfully develop a drug along with CEO Conclave. We are certainly expecting a lot from the event and are pleased with the way things have turned out so far.

***Nandita Singh, Cyber Media News Service***