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Mission $100 billion by 2025: National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-2020 unveiled

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The National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-20 was unveiled on December 30, 2015 by the minister for science and technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Harsh Vardhan in the presence of the secretary, Department of Biotechnology, Dr VijayRaghavan and other key stakeholders.

The Strategy aims to establish India as a world-class bio-manufacturing hub. It intends to launch a major mission, backed with significant investments, for the creation of new biotech products, create a strong infrastructure for R&D and commercialization, and empower India's human resources scientifically and technologically.

While addressing the media persons, Dr Harsh Vardhan mentioned, "The DBT is going to soon complete 30 years. It has done commendable work over the years in catalyzing the growth of the biotechnology industry, which has a huge potential to positively impact the lives of Indians in every area, such as research, education, health, technology, and energy. This was sensed a long time ago by the Government. When Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the prime ministry, he used to say that while IT (information technology) stands for 'India Today,' BT (biotechnology) stands for 'Bharat Tomorrow.'"

The minister added further: "I believe this industry has the potential to grow like the IT industry over the next ten years and beyond. The development of the inexpensive rotavirus vaccine, available for less than a dollar in India when internationally it costs 50 dollars, is an example of what can be achieved by the Indian biotechnology industry. Several other vaccines, such as for dengue and malaria, are already under development. The growth prospects of the Indian biotechnology industry are bright provided it receives the right stimulus and an enabling environment."

The secretary, DBT, Dr VijayRaghavan in his talk elaborated on the status of the sector. "Biotechnology has an important part to play in India's growth story and there is enthusiastic support from the Government for this vision. We have drafted a very ambitious strategy with the target to turn biotechnology into a US $100bn industry by 2025. I believe this is not impossible to achieve. Several growth opportunity exists. For example, many low-end products can be successfully manufactured in India. Our challenge is to stimulate the industry players to make them partner internationally in developing these products at the fraction of the cost of what is possible outside India, and the sell them nationally as well as globally. A huge opportunity exists in the manufacture of diagnostic kits too," said Dr Raghavan.

The key elements of the National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-20:

â€¢ Build skilled workforce and leadership
â€¢ Revitalize the knowledge environment at par with the growing bio-economy
â€¢ Enhance research opportunities in basic, disciplinary and inter-disciplinary sciences
â€¢ Encourage use-inspired discovery research
â€¢ A focus on biotechnology tools for inclusive development
â€¢ Nurture innovation, translational capacity and entrepreneurship
â€¢ Ensure a transparent, efficient and globally best regulatory system and communications strategy
â€¢ Foster global and national alliances
â€¢ Strengthen institutional capacity with redesigned governance models
â€¢ Create a matrix of measurement of processes as well as outcomes

These key elements would be implemented in collaboration and partnership with other ministries, departments, state governments and international agencies. The objective is to make India ready to meet the challenge of turning biotechnology into a $100bn industry by 2025.

The National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-20 intends to:

â€¢ Launch four major missions in healthcare, food and nutrition, clean energy and education
â€¢ Create a technology development and translation network across India with global partnership, including 5 new clusters, 40 biotech incubators, 150 TTOs, and 20 bio-connect centres
â€¢ Ensure strategic and focused investment in building human capital by setting up a Life Sciences and Biotechnology Education Council

The National Biotechnology Development Strategy 2015-2020 is the direct result of formal and informal consultations over the past two years with more than 300 stakeholders, including scientists, educators, policy makers, leaders of industry and civil society, voluntary and non-government organizations, regulators and international experts. The consultations offered an opportunity to discuss and evaluate technological, societal and policy aspirations, critical success factors as well as barriers that may impede growth, and put them in a newer and broader perspective and action plan.