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Outstanding Winners

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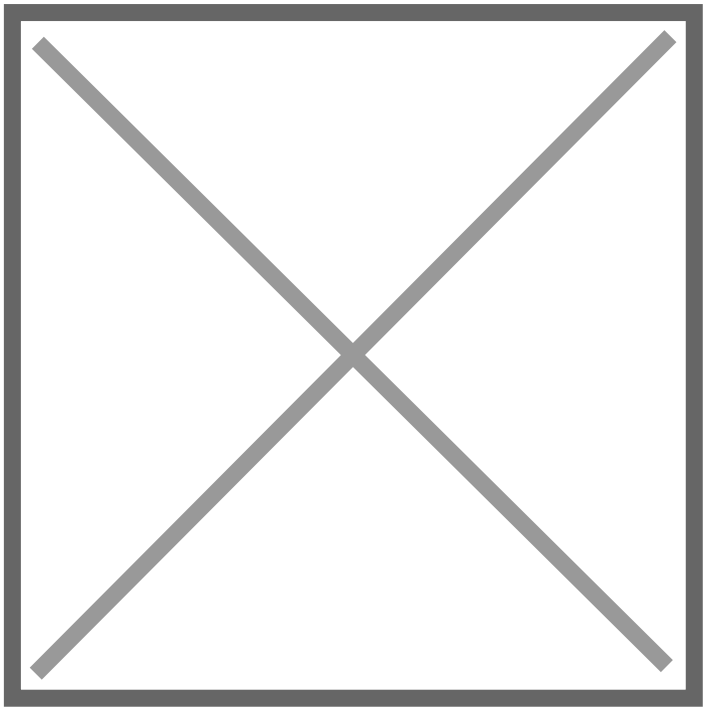

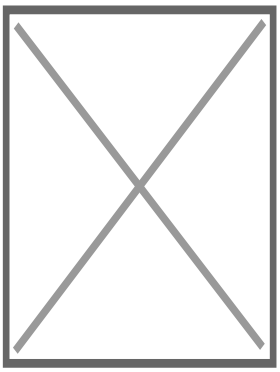

Outstanding Winners

I t is December again. And it is time for the annual *BioSpectrum* Awards for the biotechnology industry. The winners of the 3rd *BioSpectrum* Awards are profiled in the current issue of the magazine. From these profiles, it will be clear that each of them is a deserving winner for adding something unique to the development of biotechnology in the recent past.

The jury, chaired by Dr Cyrus S Poonawalla, the *BioSpectrum* Person of the Year 2004, assisted by some of the most eminent personalities representing a cross section of the industry, deliberated over two hours in Pune and unanimously chose the winners. Dr Poonwalla, however, stayed out and left it to Pune University vice chancellor, Prof. AS Kolaskar to guide the meeting while picking the Product of the Year award to avoid any conflict of interest. The combination vaccine from Serum Institute, headed by Dr Poonawalla, was in the shortlist for this category.

The comments from technology leaders like Dr R A Mashelkar, Prof G Padmanaban and Dr Manju Sharma about the awardees like Dr MK Bhan and Dr NK Ganguly clearly vindicate the jury's decisions. As Dr Mashelkar pointed out, *BioSpectrum* has honored itself by the decision to bestow the Life Time Achievement Award to Dr Ganguly. This certainly is the case. In the inaugural year itself, the magazine instituted the Awards to recognize the outstanding performances of individuals and organizations whose enormous contributions were key to the growth of the industry.

BioSpectrum provided the neutral platform for the industry to come together and pick the performers on the basis of widely defined parameters. Almost all the awardees in the last two years have gone on to add more laurels to themselves and the industry. The first awardee, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw (Person of the Year in 2003) has emerged as icon for the whole country in a short time. Dr Poonawalla (Person of the Year in 2004) was honored by the nation with the Padma Shri award a month after the *BioSpectrum* Awards function.

Entrepreneurs like Dr Krishna Ella and Dr KK Narayanan have carved a name for themselves in the industry pantheon with pathbreaking initiatives. The products picked by the jury in the last two years have made great impact in the market place.

Looking back at the year that is about to end, the biotechnology industry could be justifiably proud of its growth, and the increased acceptance and indeed the growing expectations being thrust on it by a nation looking for another winner in the global economic sweepstakes. The nation has responded by the government's road map to remove various hurdles hampering the growth of the sector.

The industry too is reciprocating the nation's support. The slew of products being brought out, including a biotech acrylic paint by a Chennai-based company, in November, is a clear indication that biotechnology is here to stay. The Rs 70-crore Stem Cell Research facility inaugurated by President APJ Abdul Kalam at the well-known Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, is yet another addition to the country's strategic decision to garner the benefits of a cutting-edge technology, avoiding the pitfalls of a prolonged national debate hampering its progress even in some advanced nations.