

Indian Peptide Society launched

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Looking at the significant role of peptides in the biopharmaceutical arena, the Indian Peptide Society has been set up under the presidency of Prof VS Chauhan, director, ICGEB. The aim of the society is to provide a platform and common forum to the scientists working on peptides in India. Later on, establishing links with the other peptide societies across the globe like the American Peptide Society and Japanese Peptide Society is on the cards. "Peptide research is on the verge of evolution in India and peptide pharmaceuticals will be coming in a big way. There is a global shift from genomics to proteomics and there is big peptide demand in the area of vaccines", said Rakesh Arora, secretary of the society and director, TechnoConcept India. Prof P Balram, director, IISc has been nominated as the vice president of the society. During the latter half of the year, the society plans to convene the "Indian Peptide Symposium" in Hyderabad which will target the industry, academia and students interested in this arena. The society is headquartered at the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi.

TechnoConcept launches custom peptide synthesis service

TechnoConcept, which provides consumables, instruments and scientific software to the life sciences industry, has launched a custom peptide synthesis service. It has established a facility at NOIDA, which is equipped with automated synthesizers, chromatography system and other equipment. The peptides are synthesized using solid phase and solution phase chemistry by employing Fmoc and t-Boc methodologies for the design and production of peptides for research purposes. TechnoConcept offers a range of peptide services from small research scale to large-scale synthesis. According to Rakesh

Arora, director, TechnoConcept, "We try to understand the need of the customer and along with standard peptides we also provide non standard peptides. Our unique facility will work as an import substitute in the future."

The company offers standard peptides and those with various modifications-terminal modification, Side modification, unusual amino acids and many others modifications, Labeled peptides, MAP peptides, etc. For most peptides, the turnaround time is about 3-4 weeks.

"To ensure quality guarantee, every purified custom peptide from its lab is analyzed by Mass Spectrum and HPLC. Our long-term aim is to establish GMP grade peptide synthesis", Rakesh added.

Wockhardt's profit up 20 percent at Rs 257 crore

Wockhardt Ltd has reported a 20 percent increase in net profit at Rs 257 crore for the year ending December 31, 2005. Consolidated annual sales, at Rs 1,412 crore, showed a 13 percent growth over 2004. The audited results for the year were announced after a board meeting on February 14, 2006. The board recommended an annual dividend of 100 percent subject to shareholders' approval.

Operating profit for the year increased by 17 percent to Rs 329 crore and operating margins improved by 80 basis points to 23.3 percent. Wockhardt invested Rs 104 crore, amounting to 7.4 percent of the turnover, in R&D during the year. For the quarter ending on December 31, 2005, net profit stood at Rs 73 crore, posting a 16 percent improvement over the corresponding quarter of 2004.

"Our investments in organization and people in two critical growth areas are now paying back" our US business has grown by more than 50 percent, and the biotechnology business has grown by 54 percent," said Habil Khorakiwala, chairman, Wockhardt.

Mascon launches EXOME-Horizon

Mascon has launched EXOME-Horizon-a complete bioinformatics solution platform.

EXOME is an integrated system for bioinformatics and has bioinformatics software suites required by high-end biological research labs. From suites for large genome analysis to automated drug design, EXOME is designed to be the one-stop solution for biocomputing needs.

The package combines the robust Linux platform with customized, high performance hardware to facilitate efficient analysis of large amounts of data.

The tool is an enhanced and customized distribution of Fedora (a Linux distribution) for bioinformatics research and education. In addition, it includes the capability to adapt to HPC (High Power computing) requirements and contains all major bioinformatics software. EXOME- Horizon uses client server architecture, which means that while the databases etc. run on a Linux server, multiple users can access the tools and databases, from either Linux or windows machines (browser based access).

EXOME- Horizon contains hundreds of bioinformatics programs and software and it has been designed in such way that it can be customized for individual client requirements.

Panacea Biotec raises \$100 million via FCCB issue

Panacea Biotec has concluded its \$100 million foreign currency convertible bonds issue on February 13, 2006. The five-year bonds are split into two equal-sized tranches and the company plans to list them on the Singapore Stock Exchange. Tranche 1 was priced with a 4.5 percent semi-annual coupon and was sold at par. It will be redeemed, with a yield to maturity of 4.5 percent. Tranche 2 was also sold at par, with a zero coupon, and a yield to maturity of 7.25 percent.

United Phosphorus snaps up Dutch firm

United Phosphorus Ltd, India's largest producer of crop protection products with a wide range of products that include fumigants, fungicides, insecticides, rodenticides and herbicides, has acquired through its subsidiary Biowin Corporation Ltd in Mauritius, Advanta Netherlands Holdings BV, based in Netherlands. The acquisition will be effective from February 14, 2006.

This acquisition will allow United Phosphorus to have a jumpstart entry in the high end of seed business, says a press

release. This is likely to provide a strong platform to the company and make it a leader in many important products.

Ethypharm announces out-licensing deal with Colombian company

Ethypharm, a leading French multinational drug delivery company has announced the finalization and signing of a new out-licensing and supply contract for the Colombian market with Euroetika Ltd, a leading Colombian drug company. The products will be supplied by its wholly owned subsidiary Ethypharm LL India.

The deal is for three products: Tizanidine Sustained Release " a skeletal muscle relaxant, Metaclopramide Sustained Release " an antiemetic and Levocetirizine Orodispersible tablets " anti histamine agent. The products would be supplied from Ethypharm's manufacturing facility near Mumbai as penultimate stage bulk formulations and converted to finished formulations in Colombia under technical supervision from Ethypharm. Euroetika Ltd is also an existing customer of Ethypharm for other Novel Drug Delivery System (NDDS) products.

The Colombian market was approximately \$1.3 billion in 2004 as per IMS data and is growing at approximately 12 percent. "This deal would consolidate Ethypharm's already significant presence in the South and Latin America markets," said Ajey Kumar, CEO of Ethypharm LL India.

SIRO Clinpharm, GCP Siro offer services to US Pharma and Biotechs

Siro Clinpharm, a leading CRO has entered into a formal agreement with GCP Siro of USA to offer a US Clinical Research Organization specializing in the management of late-stage clinical studies using proven capabilities in India. With this agreement, SIRO Clinpharm will be expanding its global presence in the CRO space.

"Pharma and biotech companies can now utilize Indian clinical trial investigators, patient populations, and other expert resources for their global registration trials without adding overheads or internal project management costs. GCP Siro provides the necessary US-based project management, client liaison and other direct drug development support services," the release said quoting Dr Mark Bradshaw, president, GCP Siro.

Dr Gautam Daftary, founder of Siro Clinpharm, said, "The highest level of scientific integrity, world-class quality, and a focus on client service are the cornerstones of Siro and GCP Siro. Led by a senior US pharmaceutical executive with significant first-hand experience in India, GCP Siro guarantees compliance with the principles of Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and full US and India regulatory requirements."

Sun Pharma board clears demerger scheme

The Board of Directors of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries has approved the demerger of the company's innovative R&D, namely the NCE and NDDS programs, to a new company with the same equity holding pattern. The difference between generic reverse engineering and innovative R&D in terms of risk profile, longer time frames and considerably larger resource requirements in the future, were cited as key reasons for the split. Dilip Shanghvi, chairman and managing director of Sun Pharmaceutical Industries would be the chairman of the demerged company. The demerged company will be listed on the BSE and the NSE after the requisite clearances. In addition to an approximately 100 person staff of scientists, running programs in NCE and NDDS, assets including cash and equipment would be transferred to the demerged company.

The board ratified demerger scheme proposes April 1, 2006 as the effective date of the demerger. As part of the scheme, shareholders of Sun Pharma would be allotted an equity share of Re 1 each for each share of Rs 5 of the parent company, held on the record date.

Arun & Co to introduce mineral enriched yeasts in India

Arun & Co, a frontrunner amongst biotechnology suppliers with diversified interest in industrial biotechnology, diagnostics, molecular biology and pharmaceuticals, will introduce mineral enriched yeasts by March 2006. It has entered into a tie-up with Institut Rosell / Lallemand Human Nutritions, Canada, one of the leading probiotics and mineral enriched yeast manufacturers in the world.

Recently Selenium Yeast of "Lalmin" brand from Institut Rosell / Lallemand was chosen as certified reference material by the National Research Council of Canada fortifying the growing trust in mineral enriched yeasts by developed countries.

Rashesh Doshi, director, Arun & Co said, "Yeast enriched with minerals is the latest trend in the international nutraceuticals market with many recent studies having confirmed the superior bioavailability of yeast minerals versus synthetic sources such as gluconates and chelates."

Mineral enriched yeasts are known as biological source of essential trace elements. They are normally inactivated whole cells of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* rich in minerals containing elevated levels of Se, Zn, Cr and Fe.