



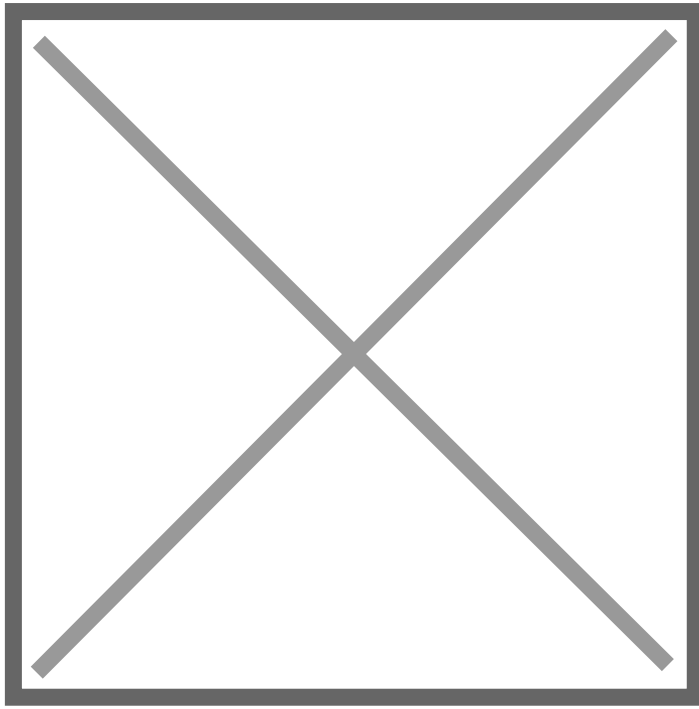
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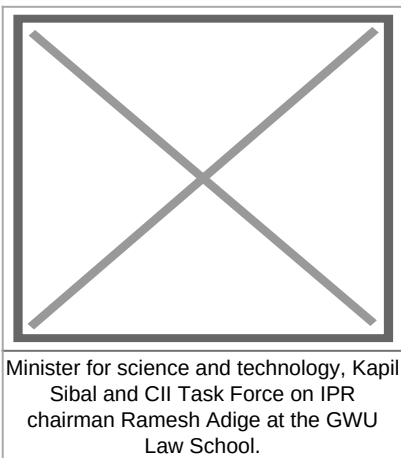
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India leads Asian charge for global attention at BIO

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Minister for science and technology, Kapil Sibal and CII Task Force on IPR chairman Ramesh Adige at the GWU Law School.

Asian countries, led by China, India, Taiwan and Malaysia made a determined attempt to catch the attention of biotech leaders from around the world during the 14th annual gathering of the industry in April 2006.

"We are a Sleeping Giant in biotech. But don't hesitate to cooperate with a Sleeping Giant," appealed Wang Hongguang, director-general of China National Center for Biotechnology Development. " We have set up a world class regulatory regime and we have a growing \$1 billion market. A biotech drug can be developed for \$300-400 million in India which will open up a huge market in Asia and other developing countries and also make it affordable for the middle class Americans," emphasized India's minister for science and technology, Kapil Sibal, at the inaugural international ministerial conference which started the annual Biotechnology Industry Organization convention at the McCormick Convention Center in Chicago.

Together India and China offered the world the carrot of a combined market of 2.4 billion people who will all need various medicines and health care solutions. The message: Ignore this market only at your own peril.

Highlighting the introduction of the advanced intellectual property rights (IPR) regime which allows product patents in pharmaceuticals since 2005, Sibal said the measure has led to a 3-fold rise in filing of patents in India from 4,800 in 2004 to 18,000 in 2005. India was also beefing up the IPR infrastructure with the addition of 200 patent examiners and 13 trade mark experts to the network.

China too made a similar pitch. IPR is hot in China, said the senior official. There were some 476,264 patent application filed in the country last year and 214,003 patents were granted in 2005. And nearly a fifth of these were filed by foreign companies and individual, showing a 18 percent jump over the previous year. This was to dispel the impression that China was not very serious about patents. "The Supreme Court of China has increased the risk for those involved in patent infringement," he emphasized.

Other Chinese officials presented the strong national support given to the biotech sector. "You can save 70 percent of your research costs, 80 percent of your clinical trials expenses and 30 percent of the manufacturing costs if you do all the drug discovery in China," said another senior Chinese official.

Taiwan's minister of state for S&T, Feng Chin Lin, stressed that Taiwan's \$5-billion life sciences industry was making rapid strides and the country was becoming a major global hub for clinical trials. Over 13,000 publications on clinical trials were published in the country last year and Taiwan was harmonizing all its regulations to be compliant with global requirements.

"It will cost less than 50 percent of the expenses to do clinical trials in Taiwan than in the US or Europe. And we have reduced the average processing time to 43 days compared to 30 days by the US FDA and 60 days by European regulators," the minister, himself a molecular biologist who had studied in Canada told the global biotech industry leaders. Some 357 large, multi-centric clinical trials were being done in Taiwan currently.

Bhan makes an impact

While Minister Sibal led the Indian charge at BIO with his impassioned speech at the inaugural session, DBT secretary Dr M K Bhan sustained the attention of industry leaders at a special session on India in the afternoon.

During the 60-minute session, Dr Bhan gave an overview of India's biotech strengths, the new strategy being put in place to use biotech tools to promote health, increase agriculture yields and promote sustainable economic growth.

Dr Bhan highlighted the major features of the new regulatory regime which had been introduced to cut down procedural delays involved in the approval of biotechnology products. Four stakeholders from the sector, Dr M Vidyasagar of TCS, Dr PK Seth, CEO of Lucknow Biotech Park, patent expert Dr Malathi Lakshmikumaran and Yes Bank's life sciences head, Alok Gupta, enlightened the vast gathering about various aspects of India's growing biotechnology industry.

Biocon CMD Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw was one of the three panelists at the panel discussion that followed the release of the 20th annual Global Biotechnology Report, Beyond Borders by Ernst & Young.

Feng highlighted the fact that the government was very keen on promoting biotech as the engine of growth and has invested over \$ 805 million to support the industry recently and has plans to attract \$5 billion in private investments in the next five years and \$2.2 billion in biopharma R&D by 2010.

Not to be left behind, Malaysia's minister for S&T and innovation, Dr Jamaludin Jarjis called for a pan-Asian cooperation and collaboration to take up joint research and development efforts among the Asian countries. "Let us hold an Asian edition of BIO in India first, Malaysia and Taiwan," he appealed as his counterparts from India and Taiwan nodded in agreement.

Malaysia was giving the greatest importance to biotechnology as the new engine of economic growth has formulated a policy that will combine the country's strengths in information technology and engineering to use the bioscience tools for national development, the minister said.

Taiwan's minister pointed out that the country was producing over 8,000 graduates in biosciences annually to feed the growing biotech industry. "We are ready to engage the world to make this industry a happening one in our country," Feng said.

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Trade show

India had a much bigger participation in the trade show with the India Pavillion organized by the Confederation of Indian Industry having stalls by Jubilant Biosys, Lucknow Biotech Park and Dabur Foundation. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) also had a big stall to display the country's biotech strengths.

TCS and International Biotech Park, Pune had separate big stalls. The Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises (ABLE) too organized another big pavilion with the participation of Biocon, Bangalore Bio and Government of Karnataka, ReaMetrix, Strand Life Sciences, Aurigene, Metahelix, Advinus Therapeutics and Avesthagen.

ABLE and BIOTECCanada also signed a MOU to strive for closer cooperation in the biotech sector between the two countries. The agreement was signed at BIOTECCanada's booth at BIO 2006 in Chicago on April 10 by Dr KK Narayanan, MD, Metahelix Life Sciences and president of ABLE and Peter Brenders, president of BIOTECCanada. ABLE also organized a special India nite along with Burrill & Co. which was attended by over 300 people who were keen to learn more about Indian biotech and increase collaborations with the industry.

India Biotechnology Handbook 2006 brought out specially for the occasion by BioSpectrum in collaboration with the DBT, CII and ABLE was circulated widely to the BIO participants. The handbook provided a ready-reference to the capabilities of India in biotechnology.

The Sleeping Giant

- Chinese officials reeled out an impressive array of statistics to stress the point that it was indeed a major biotech resource for the world.
- Total sales of China pharmaceutical industry reached \$ 44 billion, including \$ 31 billion from biomedicines which also covers traditional Chinese medicines.
- The annual growth of the biomedicine industry is more than 20 percent.
- More than 30 biomedicines and vaccines are in the Chinese market.
- Over 150 biotechnology products are in clinical trials.
- The first gene therapy drug in the world, Recombinant Adenovirus-P53, anti-cancer injection , was developed in China in 2003.
- The annual output of Chinese fermentation industry stands at \$20 billion.
- China produces 400,000 tons of industrial enzymes annually.
- China is the world's largest producer of antibiotics, glutamic acid, citric acid, vitamin C and beer.
- China is one of the few countries in the world that is mastering the techniques for adult somatic cell cloning of large animals.

Earlier, the CII took the 5th Indian Biotech delegation to the US. Led by Dr Swati Piramal of Nicholas Piramal, the delegation had Dr Bhan and Sibal, along with industry leaders as members. The delegation went to Washington DC prior to BIO and visited many institutions including the National Institute of Health (NIH), George Washington University Law School, the US Patent Office, and the Center for Innovative Technology-Commonwealth of Virginia. A CII spokesperson said the visits were organized primarily to understand the best practices of these organizations and explore the possibilities of partnership and joint ventures between Indian companies and the US. Overall, it was yet another fruitful year for Indian biotech leader.

The delegation also attended the dinner hosted by PAN IIT and CII Indian American Council. The mission was very well received in the US which reflects the growing visibility of India on the global biotech scene and also shows that the companies from across the world are keen to do business and research with India, considering its strength, added the CII official.

Narayanan Suresh in Chicago