

"We have incubators for SMEs looking for opportunities in CRO"

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How do you see the growth of biotechnology in Karnataka and in India?

Biotechnology is the next sunrise industry with the whole world looking at it with great hope. It is the availability of quality manpower that fuels this sector and India has plenty of such manpower. Karnataka has been the fastest growing bio-cluster in the country. The presence of renowned life science research institutes like IISc, NCBS, JNCASR, UAS have added to the growth. The state has attracted one new biotech company every month for the past two years.

What are your immediate programs / action plans to boost biotechnology in the state?

The government of Karnataka has decided to establish a state of the art Biotech Park with Common Facilities Center and incubation facility for the biotech startups. The department is also looking at possibility of establishing a marine biotech park in Uttar Kannada district.

Where do you see Karnataka in the biotech map of India in terms of revenue/market capitalization?

As mentioned earlier Karnataka has been the fastest growing bio-cluster in the entire country. It has more than 65 percent of the core biotech companies in the country. The investments in this sector have quadrupled since 1999. The state has attracted over Rs 500 crore of investments and is generating revenues in excess of Rs 700 crore annually.

Karnataka was the first state in India to have announced a BT policy. But today many states like Maharashtra, TN, AP, UP, MP, Delhi, Kerala, Chattisgarh, Gujarat etc. are showing keen interest in BT. Has Karnataka been able to capitalize on the early lead? What is Karnataka's unique selling proposition (USP)?

It is the availability of research talent, cost effective trained English speaking manpower, and the presence of leading life

science research institutes that have provided an edge over the other states.

You were part of the CII biotech mission group to US, Canada and UK in June 2002. In Feb 2003 the agri-biotech delegation from Canada has visited Bangalore. What is the out come of these visits from both the sides in terms of joint ventures, flow of funds?

Exchange of visits has resulted in several US based companies to have strategic alliances with Bangalore based biotech companies and many more are looking at setting up their shop in Bangalore.

With no proper syllabus, more institutes and colleges are offering courses in biotechnology at the cost of students. How will the government tackle the mushrooming problem of biotech departments/ institutes in the state?

The department of IT and BT has established BITES, the Board for IT Education Standards in engineering colleges. Similarly, we will shortly have Karantaka Biotechnology Developmental Council (KBDC), which shall look into the fly by night operators. The department has initiated formation of a committee with educationists, vice chancellors and other officials to upgrade the biotech syllabi regularly.

Although a BT park was announced as a part of the state's BT policy in 2001, why has there been a delay in setting up a BT park near Electronic City in 75 acres of land?

Though several sites were suggested for the Biotech Park it certainly takes time for having an ideal site. The Vision Group on Biotechnology has opined that the Electronic City phase III site is best suited for the proposed Biotech Park.

The companies in Biotechnology are looking at the government/venture funding. In such a scenario, why is the government holding back the creation of the corpus fund of Rs 50 crore which it had announced during the last budget?

The government has already announced the creation of "The Biotech Fund" in the millennium biotech policy with suitable contribution from the biotech industry. This fund shall certainly be very useful for small and medium scale biotech startups.

Do you have any programs for the small and medium entrepreneurs who are interested to take up contract research projects?

We have already established incubators in the Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology for small and medium scale companies that are looking out for opportunities in the contract research sector. It is important to mention that the Common Facilities Center in the proposed Biotech Park will have full-fledged incubators to handle many areas of biotechnology in the proposed Biotech Park.