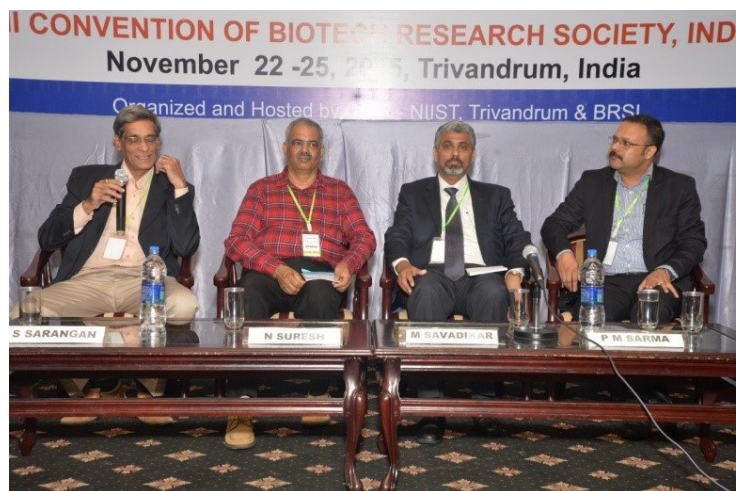


A report on International Conference on New Horizons in Biotechnology (NHBT-2015)

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The International Conference on New Horizons in Biotechnology 2015 (NHBT-2015) was organized by the CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology jointly with the Biotech Research Society, India (BRSI) during November 22-25, 2015 featuring the latest developments in the frontier areas of biotechnology, including industrial biotechnology, biofuels and bioenergy, agricultural biotechnology, biotechnology in diagnostics and therapeutics, biotechnology in environmental remediation and waste management at Hotel Residency Tower, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

The conference brought together leading scientists and technologists from industry and academics in the area of biotechnology and allied subjects to share their thoughts and views on various topics and to develop possible collaborative linkages in cutting edge areas of biotechnology. The conference was a mega event and one of the series organized every year by BRSI headquartered at CSIR-NIIST Thiruvananthapuram.

The conference was attended by about 600 delegates from across the world. The line-up of speakers consisted of international experts such as Patrick Hallenbeck from University of Montreal, Canada, Robin Anderson from US Department of Agriculture, Mohamed Taherzadeh from University of Borås, Sweden, GR Castro from University of La-Plata, Argentina, Claude- Guilles Dussap from University Blaise Pascal, France, Michael Bott from Institute of Bio and Geo Sciences, Germany, Andres Floto from University of Cambridge, UK, DJ Lee from National Taiwan University Taiwan, Hao Huu Ngo from Australia, Christian Larroche and Philippe Michaud from Polytech Clermont Ferrand, Institut Pascal, France, Michael Herrmann from Germany, etc and renowned Indian scientists, including CS Nautiyal from NBRI, Lucknow; Dr DB Sahoo, IBSD, Imphal; RS Sangwan, CIAB, Mohal; Javed Agrewala, IMTECH Chandigarh; S Venkata Mohan, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad; T Bhaskar, CSIR-IIP, Dehradun; Pramod Wangikar, IIT Bombay; IS Thakur, JNU, New Delhi; SN Upadhyay, BHU, Varanasi; Swaroop Sarangan, Reliance Industries Ltd, etc. The conference was attended by India's leading industrial R&D houses. There were 24 technical sessions, organized into three parallel sessions each day with a total of 106 invited lectures on the most advanced topics in different disciplines.

The conference opened on 22nd November and in his welcome address, Prof Ashok Pandey, Chairman, NHBT-2015 mentioned that the NHBT forum, which was holding its sixth edition of 4-yearly Biotechnology Conference being organized by CSIR-NIIST in collaboration with the Biotech Research Society, India has been extremely successfully in attaining its aims of disseminating the knowledge and developing networking and collaboration across the globe, not only for scientific R&D but also for industrial linkages. In his inaugural address, Dr Ajayaghosh, Director, CSIR-NIIST inaugurating the conference emphasized the need for need-based research, which addressed the welfare of the society at large. Dr K Madhavan Nampoothiri, Convener, NHBT-2015 provided the details of scientific program and Dr Rajeev Sukumaran, Co-Convener provided the details of social programs and general information. Subsequently, NHBT-2015 abstracts book and BRSI Yearbook 2015 were released by the dignitaries on the dais.

Prof DJ Lee, Chairman, IFIBiop, Prof CG Dussap Charter President, IFIBiop and Prof D Madamwar, President, BRSI felicitated the gathering. Subsequently, the annual awards function of the BRSI was held in which awards under different categories were declared and given away by the dignitaries on the dais. These included Overseas Fellow award to Dr Sunil Kaul, AIST, Japan; Honorary Fellow to Prof Kasturi Datta, JNU New Delhi, Fellow to Dr RS Prakasham, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad, Prof RS Verma, IIT Chennai & Dr Shailendra K Saxena, CSIR-CCMB Hyderabad; Life-Time achievement award to Prof SN Upadhyay, BHU Varanasi & Prof P Gunasekaran, MKU Madurai; Woman Scientist award to Dr K Pandima Devi, Alagappa University, Karaikudi; Young Scientist award to Dr Amit Mishra, Devi Ahilya University, Indore; AU-CBT Excellence awards for research scholars to Mr GN Nikhil, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad; Ms Leya Thomas, CSIR-NIIST, Trivandrum; Nagarajan Raju, IIT Chennai and Mr Suresh Babu, CSIR-IICT Hyderabad; Malaviya Memorial award for Senior Faculty to Prof Rintu Banerjee, IIT Kharagpur & for Young Faculty to Dr Rajesh Rastogi, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.

This was followed by the inauguration of the mini-exhibition by Dr Ajayaghosh, Prof Lee and Prof Dussap in the lobby of the hotel, which show-cased the stalls from Elsevier UK, Kash Biotech, Hi-Media, Researchco Books, and Crescent. Elsevier stall exhibited several journals related to the theme of the conference and the books recently published on biofuels and biorefineries by Pandey et al. This was followed by a cultural program in which students from Gulbarga, Patiala and Thiruvananthapuram presented various classical and cinematic dances, including a group song by the CSIR-NIIST TeamBiotech students.

The highlights of the conference were two major symposia - one on Biomass and biorefineries, and the second on Mycobacterium and infectious diseases. The former addressed the global challenges in energy and the role of plant biomass based renewable fuel alternatives and the futuristic bio-refinery concepts to herald a global carbohydrate economy to break free from the petroleum crux to attain sustainability and a greener world. The latter addressed tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, which have particular relevance to the developing and underdeveloped nations. This covered various topics, including the latest breakthroughs in the understanding of these diseases, and the current and futuristic interventions using cutting edge biotechnology.

Besides these two major symposia, the conference was unique in having an industry-young researcher interactive session on 25th November 2015 where the budding young researchers had an opportunity to interact with the top industry representatives to address their queries and concerns. This session was moderated by Mr Narayanan Suresh, Group Editor, BioSpectrum, who initiated the discussion with a presentation on industrial scenario of business of biotechnology in India. Dr Swaroop Sarangan, Reliance Industries Ltd, Mumbai; Priyanshu M Sarma, BT Technologies, Guwahati and Mr Mahendra Savadikar, HTBS, Pune participated as panellists. There were about 400 poster presentations in three days, which covered areas, including industrial biotechnology, biofuels and biorefinery, environmental biotechnology, food and agricultural biotechnology, medical biotechnology, basic and applied molecular biology and bioinformatics.

Best posters in each session received the Elsevier poster awards or BRSI poster awards. Major work presented in the conference would be published in the special issues of leading journals - Bioresource Technology, Renewable Energy and Biologia.

The closing session of the conference was held at 4.30 pm on 25th November 2015, in which some 425 delegates were present. Dr Sheel Nuna, Director General (India), Queensland University of Technology, Australia was the guest of honour. This session witnessed the Best paper awards (2014) for 10 top cited authors for Bioresource Technology, which was announced by Dr Katherine Eve, Executive Publishing Editor, Elsevier, who also gave Elsevier Best Posters awards to the winners. NHBT Best Posters awards were given by Dr Sheel Nuna and Dr Ajayaghosh. Prof Datta Madamwar announced IIT Mumbai as the venue for the XIII Convention of the BRSI to be held during December 8-11, 2016. Prof Pramod Wangikar, as the convenor of the convention made a presentation on the outline and plans and invited the members of the Society to attend it. The conference came to close with the concluding remarks from Dr A Ajayaghosh and Prof Ashok Pandey.

The conference was supported by International Forum for Industrial Bioprocesses (IFIBiop); International Organization for Biotechnology and Bioengineering (IOBB); world's leading scientific publishing house - Elsevier, UK; Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi; Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi; Kerala State Council for Science Technology and Environment, Trivandrum; State Bank of Travancore, Trivandrum; Springer; Anchrom Enterprises (I) Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; Biotech Express, New Delhi; Crescent Lab Equipments, Cochin; Eppendorf India Ltd; Hi-media Laboratories Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; Inexus Biotech Pvt. Ltd., Chennai; Inkarp Instruments Pvt. Ltd.; Invitrogen Bioservices India Pvt. Ltd., Bangalore; MARS Bioanalytical Pvt. Ltd., Delhi; Reliance Industries Ltd., Mumbai; Researchco Books & Periodicals Pvt. Ltd., Delhi; Sisco Research Laboratories Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai; Thermo Fisher Scientific India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai. Kash Biotech was the media partner for the conference along with BioSpectrum.