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â??Hyderabad Pharma City will help companies optimise manufacturing on par or even better than Chinaâ?•

10 February 2021 | News

As the Indian life sciences industry develops its future growth strategy, it is the right time to assess the countryâ??s current position globally and identify key focus areas



BioaAsia 2021 is all set to explore industry's current and future potential and aims to identify areas where we need to 'Move the Needle' immediately. BioSpectrum spoke to Shakthi Nagappan, Director of Life Sciences, Govt of Telangana and CEO, BioAsia, to find out more details in store at BioAsia 2021, being held on February 22 & 23, 2021.

Edited Excerpts-

What are the major highlights of the upcoming BioAsia 2021 event?

BioAsia 2021 will be organised as a hybrid event. This is the first time BioAsia conference is going virtual and we are receiving increased interest from the life sciences community around the world to join the event. We anticipate that more than 30000 people will join the event. With the theme 'Move the Needle', the event will provide a platform to deliberate on topics of importance for the life sciences industry like India's role in vaccines, learnings from COVID-19, digital health, trends in the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry, etc.

Are you planning to make any major announcements at the event?

Over the years, the State Government has been utilising the global platform provided by BioAsia to make important announcements in the life sciences sector and also engage with the stakeholders. Similarly, it is expected that there will be some announcements during BioAsia 2021 as well.

What is in store for the startup sector at BioAsia 2021?

The structure of the programme is formulated in a way to cater to all the major stakeholders of the life sciences industry including start-ups. The focus on Day 1 would be 'Global Health and COVID-19' and Day 2 focus would be on sectoral sessions on 'Pharma and Medtech'. There is also a spotlight session centred around start-ups - 'Creating Unicorns' by George Bickerstaff, Co-Founder and Managing Director, MM Dillon & Co, Former CFO, Novartis, and Dr Jo Bury, CEO, VIB (Flemish Institute of Biotechnology).

How has been the response of the previous editions of BioAsia so far? Have you incorporated any major changes this time besides going virtual?

BioAsia has grown in reputation and has emerged as one of the leading life sciences events in Asia and also globally, benefitting from its extraordinary participant history including the likes of several Nobel Prize winners, Lasker Awardees, Breakthrough Prize Awardees, and eminent industry leaders, among others. Over the course of 17 years, the event has witnessed participation from more than 20,000 leaders representing over 93 Countries and has conducted more than 20,000 partnering meetings. Going virtual for the first time, the 2021 event will have a wider global reach and convene the most influential global leaders to call out the need for various stakeholders to actively contribute to the global health efforts.

How is the Telangana govt promoting the growth of MedTech sector?

Medical Devices sector has been identified as a priority sector for Telangana. The Government of Telangana has established the country's largest medical device sector in Hyderabad. Within a span of about three years, around 40 companies are in the process of setting up R&D and manufacturing operations in the park covering a range of activities including implants (orthopaedic, dental and maxillofacial, etc), ophthalmic devices, ultrasound scanners, prosthetics, catheters, auto-injectors, real-time PCR Kits, ECG electrodes, diagnostic kits, among others. The park will also host Asia's largest stent manufacturing facility (1.25 Mn stents per annum) being set-up by Sahajanand Medical Technologies.

What are some of the major challenges being facing the life sciences and pharma sector in India, and how does the Telangana government plan to address those?

Life sciences sector globally is at an inflection point. In India, COVID-19 has brought to fore several important areas that need immediate attention - growing dependence on the import of APIs & KSMs, medical devices, among others. As a State committed to the growth of the life sciences sector, a number of initiatives have been rolled out – expansion of Genome Valley-India's first and largest life sciences manufacturing and R&D cluster and strengthening the Medical Devices Park. The State has also envisioned the establishment of Hyderabad Pharma City, which will be the world's largest integrated cluster for the pharmaceutical sector aimed at promoting local manufacturing and also helping companies move up the value chain. As a result of the synergies and scale, it is estimated that Hyderabad Pharma City will help companies optimise of their CAPEX and OPEX investment by about 30 to 35 per cent leading to their cost of manufacturing on par or even better than China.