

Meena Gupta is new GEAC chief

11 December 2003 | News



The nation's biotech regulatory agency, the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) has got another chief. Meena Gupta, a 1971 batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has assumed office as the chairperson of the agency, which is part of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). She is the fifth chief of this regulatory agency in 2003.

Gupta is also an additional secretary rank officer in the same ministry. She chaired the November 27 GEAC meeting which decided to ask the Drug Controller General India to submit an inquiry report on Shankinase, a recombinant streptokinase by Hyderabad-based Shantha Biotechnics. The drug was earlier given clearance by the GEAC. Bureaucratic circles are very impressed with her handling of the health issues in the aftermath of the supercyclone that hit the Orissa coast in 2001. Gupta moved to the MoEF in January 2003. Prior to that, she was the health secretary of the Orissa government. She had been assigned the GEAC role briefly early in 2003.

"Since certain formalities are still required for this procedure (GEAC role), I don't have enough words to say or comment about it. There is no doubt that it is a challenging job. But all I am concerned at the moment is to fulfill the expectations of ministry and come out with positive results," she told BioSpectrum when contacted.

Sushil Kumar may be GEAC co-chairman

The government may beef up the GEAC with the induction of at least four scientists as permanent members. Most of the other members participate in GEAC as ex-officio member.

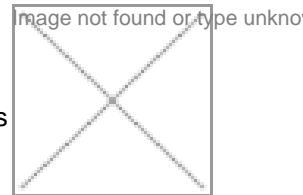
Well-known plant biotechnology and plant genetic specialist Sushil Kumar is likely to take over as the co-chairman of GEAC immediately. Kumar was earlier the director of the Central Institute of Medical and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow. CIMAP is a leading laboratory in the CSIR chain. The 63-year old scientist is currently a professor at the National Center for Plant Genome Research (NCPGR) in the JNU campus, New Delhi.

Sources in the government said three other scientists are also likely to join the GEAC. They are: Dr AK Bhatnagar, a professor in the Department of Botany, University of Delhi; Dr RP Sharma of the National Research Center on Plant Biotechnology, in the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, New Delhi and Dr Subhash Chand, a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

Dr Bhatnagar has specialized in Reproductive Biology and Environmental Biology and is a well-known personality in the agriculture research community. His most recent work was on the influence of cadmium on the growth and development of *Vicia faba* Linn. His works on algae dependent bio-remediation of hazardous wastes has also been well recognized.

Shyamal Pal joins Sherman

Shyamal Pal has joined Sherman International, which is into designing and manufacturing biotech instruments like bioreactors, fermentors and cell culture systems. As manager, business development, Sherman he is handling several analytical, environmental and biotech products and also looking after projects and activities for manufacturing fermentors, bioreactors and cell culture system. Prior to this he was with Chemito Instruments where he developed the biotechnology division. He was the first to introduce bioreactor/fermentor in Chemito.



With a strong theoretical background he has successfully designed the reactors and introduced automated colony counting system for the first time in India. Having done his masters in microbiology and biotechnology from Vidyasagar University and PhD in agricultural microbiology at B R Ambedkar University, he started his professional career as product executive with Labmate Asia Pvt Ltd .