

"Gujarat has a strong network to support the growth of biotechnology"

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Dr Manju Sharma stresses on public-private partnership

"Gujarat has a network of academic institutions, knowledge-based scientific support and also good administration, which will support the growth of the biotechnology industry in the state," said Dr Manju Sharma, principal advisor, biotechnology, Government of Gujarat and former secretary, department of biotechnology (DBT).

She was speaking at the biotechnology session in Vibrant Gujarat 2007, a global investors summit organized by the Gujarat government on January 13, 2007 at Ahmedabad.

Dr Manju Sharma said, "Biotechnology is a focused area for economic growth for any country. Like Information Technology, the government has given equal importance to bioinformatics and set up bioinformatics centers across the country. Besides, measures were taken in the last 15 years in developing human resources and setting up infrastructure for the same. However, still there are some concerns related to acceptance of GM technology, bio-safety guidelines, and regulatory procedures. To overcome the issues in biotechnology, we have to strengthen the public-private partnership by bringing all stakeholders-scientists, academicians and industry people on a single platform."

Dr Ute Stolze, vice president of Genezyme, sharing her thoughts on "Influence of biotechnology on public healthcare system in the coming future," said, "Genezyme is intended to work with the government of Gujarat in enzyme replacement therapy in

Gaucher's Disease, which is the most prevalent lysosomal storage disease due to deficiency of glucocerebrosidase (GCR) activity with secondary accumulation of GCR within the lysosomes of macrophages."

Dr KO Isaac, chairman and managing director, ABL Biotechnologies, elaborating on the opportunities in marine biotechnology, said, "Gujarat has a lot of potential to offer to the pharma industry because of the availability of huge marine resources at its coastline. Initiatives in research and development in marine biotechnology, government support will open up more opportunity to invest in marine biotechnology." At the same time, he also stressed on the conservation of the marine resources.

Dr Dave Dickenson, chief marketing officer, Stemcyte Corp., USA, who signed an MoU with the government to set up stem cell research facility in the state, said, "More than 70 diseases have been successfully treated with stem cells. These include cancers (leukemias, lymphomas, myelomas), blood disorders (thalassemias, sickle cell anemia, Fanconi anemia), and immune deficiency diseases. More lives can be saved by providing high quality, safe and effective stem cell transplantation and therapy to all patients in need."

Dr William Rutter, CEO of US-based Synergics Inc, and founder of pharma giant Chiron Inc, sharing his views on 'Strategies for biotechnology start-ups,' said: "Gujarat has core competency in pharma manufacturing. There are opportunities and challenges in the biopharmaceutical space. Opportunities are there in research, drug development and clinical services. Emphasis should be given more on early prevention, diagnosis and drug efficiency."

Joel Marcus, CEO of Alexandria estate, USA, Dr Kakoli Ghosh, agriculture officer, plant production division, FAO, Rome, Sudhir Vaid, CMD, Concord Biotech and Dr CN Ramchand, director, Kemin Pharmaceuticals, Chennai, also spoke at the sessions.

Around 500 professionals including researchers and faculty from Gujarat University, Nirma University, Sardar Patel University, North Gujarat University, Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, GCRI, PERD, CSMCRI, NRCMAP and professionals from the industry participated in the seminar. The purpose of the seminar was to provide a platform for experience sharing of professionals, industries and investors, from state, national and international levels and seek their inputs, views and perceptions of Gujarat as destination for future biotechnology investment. Anandiben Patel, minister for education, Government of Gujarat, graced the occasion.