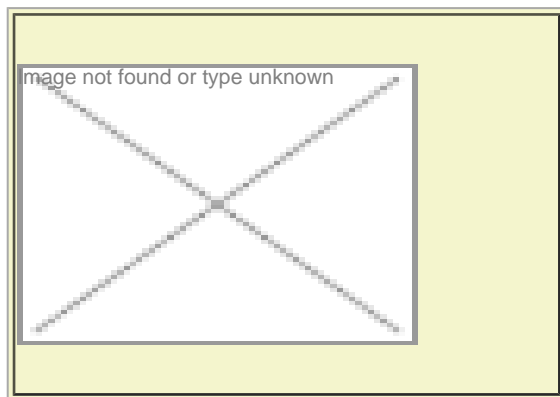
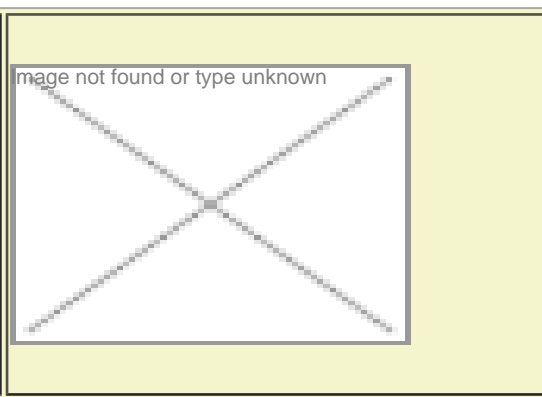


BioSpectrum AWARDS NITE

06 January 2005 | News



On December 10, 2004, BioSpectrum hosted the awards ceremony to present the Awards to recognize the contribution of the people, products and companies in the biotech industry to this sector in India. A report.

	
<p>Inauguration of BioSpectrum Awards Nite.</p>	<p>Dr MK Bhan, secretary, DBT, releasing BioSpectrum's India's Top 20 BT Schools supplement.</p>

The BioSpectrum Awards Nite in Bangalore was kicked off with a panel discussion on the proposed National Biotech Policy and followed by the release of the first ever survey of India's top 20 BT schools and the Awards presentation ceremony. The function saw one of the largest gatherings in the biotech sector. Over 320 key officials from the industry, government and academic institutions attended the function. Dr MK Bhan, secretary, Department of Biotechnology (DBT), was the chief guest for the function.

Release of India's Top 20 BT Schools Supplement

Releasing BioSpectrum's special issue on India's top 20 biotech schools, the DBT secretary said it was time to celebrate the institutes and institutions that had done yeoman service in the field of biotechnology. "They have contributed in their unique ways a tremendous passion for excellence. I am going through a phase of learning trying to absorb how science could be used to create an industry, a dynamic society, to create wealth and to address major social concerns. Our ability to elevate and commercialize is way below our potential. There is a need for institutional engineering and we need to evolve new kinds of mechanism by which we can be productive," he pointed out.

Stating that there was also a major need to change the working conditions of scientists in the country, he observed, "we are going to be extremely short of grey area of young scientific manpower and this may dawn on us so suddenly that we may be unprepared for it. Another important aspect is the standardization and quality control of everything that comes in the space of biotechnology and in the spectrum of the society. We need more human resource of much better quality. Therefore the whole range of issues on the working conditions of scientists has to be looked into."

Commenting on the progress of science in the country, Dr Bhan noted, "We need to remove impediments to expedite the cycle of development. The user community in India does not believe that Indian science can deliver for them." "The more demonstrable success we have, the more the belief will grow and more ideas will flow. The scientific workforce should be engaged in the right kind of priorities," he felt.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, CMD, Biocon Ltd. making a point during the panel discussion.

N Suresh, Editor, BioSpectrum, giving the vote of thanks.

Earlier, Ravi Sangal, president, CyberMedia Research, spoke on the research and the methodology adopted to rank biotechnology institutes on measurable and quantifiable data, which was collected from institutes directly using a structured questionnaire on different parameters such as faculty, infrastructure, industry interaction and placement. "Each of the parameters was further weighed as per weights provided by experts to arrive at the total score of an institute and the institutes were then ranked as per this score on an overall basis," he explained.

BioSpectrum Awards

The Awards Presentation ceremony commenced with Pradeep Gupta, managing director of CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum, explaining how the BioSpectrum Awards had evolved and noted that CyberMedia had been holding various such awards nites and "through this, we recognize all the individuals who have made a difference in the lives of people."

Throwing light on the Jury deliberations for selection of the BioSpectrum awardees, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, who was the chairman of the Jury, said, "We applied every one of the criteria for selecting the awardees in terms of pioneering spirit, excellence, their commitment to the sector and the difference that they have made in raising the profile of the biotech sector not just in this country but, in many cases globally. All these awardees have been very outstanding personalities."

The other members of the Jury to select the awards included KV Balasubramaniam, managing director, Indian Immunologicals, Prof . K VijayRaghavan, director, National Center for Biological Sciences, Aluri Srinivasa Rao, director, investments, ICICI Venture Funds, Mumbai, Pradeep Gupta, managing director of CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum, and E Abraham Mathew, chief editor of BioSpectrum.

Listing out the achievements of the awardees, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said, "The awardee for Life Time Achievement is somebody who has been the founder-architect of the biotech sector in India. Dr (Mrs) Manju Sharma has built this biotech sector with a lot of belief, faith and determination. She has inherited a sector that was very nascent, tumbling and that was almost forsaken in terms of every possible assistance but yet she very single-handedly raised the

resources to address various issues. It is Dr Sharma who has spearheaded the way for private-public partnership and she always has been very receptive to new ideas and suggestions. She was very instrumental in creating the Mashelkar Committee Task Force and the M S Swaminathan Task Force. She has been equally instrumental in raising various issues at the ministerial levels in terms of obtaining support. She also has been instrumental in creating many biotech parks and the awareness of biotechnology opportunities within the country."

On the choice of the Person of the Year, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said that it was a very easy one. "Dr Cyrus S Poonawalla clearly stood for all the qualities that it takes to be a leader. With his very pioneering spirit, he has built a world-class institution and put India on the vaccine map of the world. Today it is very clearly recognized that India is one of the leading vaccine producers of the world, thanks to the Serum Institute of India." DBT Secretary Dr M K Bhan presenting the Person of the Year Award to Dr Cyrus S Poonawalla, chairman, Serum Institute of India. "Dr Narayanan and Metahelix have really done an outstanding job in terms of participating in an integrated way and becoming a very important part of the biotech sector. He has taken a lot of initiatives. He is one person who has never shied away from this and has always been willing to participate and deliberate on very key issues in biotechnology," she announced.

On the Product of the Year, she pointed out, "We put Dr BV Ravikumar's product on the list because we felt that he was an unsung hero—a scientist who was determined to take to the market something that he had developed on the lab bench. It was his sheer daring and persistence that got him to where he is today. The product that we recognized in terms of its innovative development was the Japanese Encephalitis diagnostic kit that XCyton Diagnostics Ltd has developed," she informed.

This was followed by the presentation ceremony of the BioSpectrum Awards 2004. Aseem Chauhan, chairman, Amity Institute of Biotechnology, giving away the Entrepreneur of the Year Award to Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, former secretary, DBT said, "Biotechnology has been discussed in this country for many years now. It started in the labs of CSIR, a few institutions of DST, and some universities and of course a very major effort by the IISc, Bangalore. But these were all individual efforts. In order to put biotechnology in the national context, the DBT which was started in 1986, started many major initiatives. I have just been a facilitator. Whatever has been done in biotechnology today and where we stand, I think it is just because of the right approach. There has been a saying that biotechnology is probably the greatest intellectual enterprise of the human kind. India is very rich in biodiversity, which is the feeder stock of biotechnology. Our country is one among the 25 hotspots in the world. Today if we have to use the feeder stock in a manner in which it has to be used in humankind, I think we are moving in the right direction. Industry has come into this field in a very big way in the last five to six years."

Talking about the regulatory process, she said, "We have just started the exercise of simplifying the regulatory procedure. It is really not so much of a new structure one is talking of or entirely new institutional framework. It is just putting the whole thing together what exists and speeding up the process. To my mind, the success of everything depends not so much on discussion but actual action and fast pace."

Accepting the Person of the Year award from Dr M K Bhan, Dr Cyrus S Poonawalla, chairman, Serum Institute of India, was reminiscent of the times when he ventured into the field of vaccinology. "Going down memory lane, when I started the company in 1966, I never dreamt that the Serum Institute of India, the name of which at that time was considered too large, would actually grow to its fullest potential. During those days, unlike today, we didn't have a proactive biotechnology department. The industry now is a much more favorable place and aspiring biotechnologists today are much more fortunate. They would be able to go ahead much quicker than we did. We took 35 long years to come to where we are today. I want to share an important thanksgiving. I have six members in my team who have not only stood by me but also helped me to develop the company. The fact that they have been with me for 35 long years without giving me a heartache for even a single day, speaks volumes of their commitment not only to me but for the development of the vaccine technology and the progress of the company."

"The performance of the Serum Institute of India and its contribution to vaccinology is not really here to be advertised as much it could have been. I have been known more for my racing and breeding personality famed all over the country and many of my racing colleagues are surprised as to why I took a sabbatical from the head of the Board of Administration of the Indian Association of Racing and Breeding. Perhaps when they see the BioSpectrum magazine, they would know why I gave up that love and passion of mine for more of a humanitarian cause than the high-profile racing," Dr Poonawalla said. "When we started, we brought the shortages of tetanus antitoxin to an end which was really an achievement at that time but when we went into vaccines, I realized that the real benefit to society could be given by making these vaccines available at affordable prices. If we can keep the price of the product low and give it directly to the consumer in the long run, the sale of that product is bound to increase. And this is what has happened with the Serum Institute of India. We are the lowest-priced in every product that we market not only in India but also across the globe and the result has been amazing. It seems quite

likely that we can make India proud to be the number one manufacturer in terms of numbers of vaccines that children got, never in the value. The value would be one-tenth of the world but the number would touch two billion doses. My team and I hope to achieve this for India," he said.

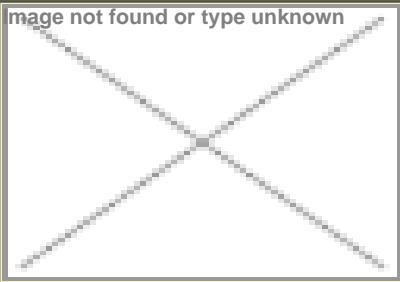
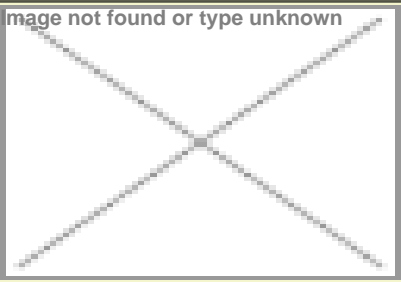
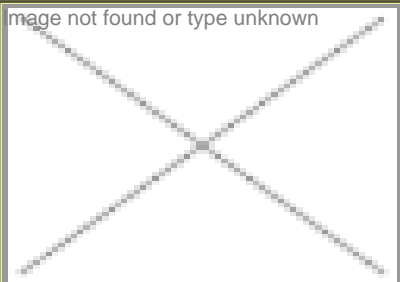
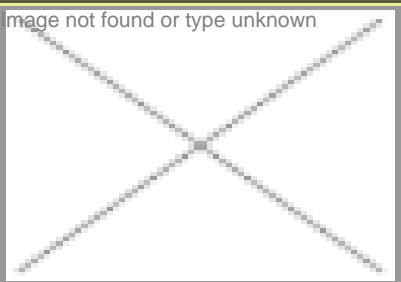
Aseem Chauhan, chairman, Amity Institute of Biotechnology, gave away the Entrepreneur of the Year award to Dr KK Narayanan of Metahelix. In his acceptance speech, Dr Narayanan attributed his success to the people of Metahelix. "This award does not entirely belong to me. I have to share with a number of people. If I am the face of Metahelix, my colleague and co-founder of my company, Gautham Nadig is the heart and soul. My other colleagues-Dr Ramanathan, who heads the genomics group, Dr Kataria who head the crop improvement group, Dr Sangam and many others form the limbs. Let me also use this occasion to acknowledge the support that we have received from NS Raghavan who happens to be the co-founder of Infosys and who has been our angel investor and his institution the Nadathur Holdings and Investment. V Sarangarajan who leads that institution is on our Board, and he has been a source of great encouragement and support. He allowed us the kind of flexibility that we needed," he said.

"We are three-and-a-half years old today and I think we have done very well for this time. But we still have a long way to go. We would not have been able to put in this energy that we have put into building Metahelix if it was not for the support that we have had back from our families," he added.

The Product of the Year award was presented by Uttara Das Gupta, general manager, State Bank of India, to Dr B V Ravikumar for JEV Chex, a diagnostic kit for Japanese Encephalitis, developed by XCyton Diagnostics Ltd. This award was sponsored by State Bank of India. On receiving the award, Dr Ravikumar said, "Napoleon once said 'give me a few medals and I will win any war'. I always thought he overrated medals but having fought in the space where government is my regulator as well as my buyer, I have been really tired in these 10 years of fighting and this medal has rejuvenated me. I am willing to fight another 20 years in this space."

He said, "Kiran Mazumdar Shaw has been one of my angel investors in the beginning and so many people worked for this product which was first funded by DBT and it was given to NIMHANS. Dr V Ravi developed this technology and he made it very robust and it is this year we thought we should make this kit. We went to DBT and asked them to do the technology transfer. I asked them in February first week and Dr Manju Sharma who was leaving at the end of February, within one month completed all formalities. One thing unique about this product is that it is especially for the masses. There are a few others who toiled for it-our research team headed by Dr Latha Lakshman which includes Balaji Chettiar, Sunil Govekar and Aditi Banerjee. They all have participated in the entire process with high spirits and it is because of their passion that I am here today."

BioSpectrum-ABLE Industry Awards

	
Dr Cyrus S Poonwalla, chairman, Serum Institute of India, receiving the BioPharma Company of the Year award from Dr A Ashok, deputy secretary and director of biotechnology, industries and commerce department, Government of Andhra Pradesh.	Dr Jagadish Mittur, director of Monsanto Research Centre, receiving the BioAgri Company of the Year award from Shankaralinge Gowda, secretary, department of Information Technology and Biotechnology, government of Karnataka.
	

BioSpectrum Jury member K V Balasubramaniam, Abraham E Mathew, Chief Editor of BioSpectrum, presenting the BioServices Company of the Year Award to Dr Ferzaan Engineer, CEO, Quintiles.

The year 2004 BioSpectrum Awards were more awards. The BioSpectrum-ABLE awards were picked up by the editors of BioSpectrum. The BioSpectrum-ABLE awards were based on the survey findings reported in the August 2004 issue of BioSpectrum and were given in five key segments of biotech-biopharma, bioinformatics, bioindustrial, bioservices and biosuppliers. Also for the first time the BioInstitute of the Year was initiated on the basis of a survey done in November 2004 by BioSpectrum along with CyberMedia Research.

The BioPharma Company of the Year award was given away by Dr A Ashok to Dr Cyrus Poonawalla of the Serum Institute of India which had a turnover of Rs 491 crore. The BioAgri Company of the Year award was bagged by MAHYCO Monsanto Biotech (India) Ltd which introduced the country's first Bt cotton seed. The award was given away by Shankaralinge Gowda, secretary, department of Information Technology and Biotechnology, government of Karnataka, to Dr Jagadish Mittur, director of Monsanto Research Centre. Biocon was adjudged the BioIndustrial Company of 2004. The award was sponsored by RK Institute of Management and Computer Science. BioSpectrum Jury member K V Balasubramaniam, managing director of Indian Immunologicals, Hyderabad, presented the BioIndustrial Company of the Year award to Dr Arun Chandravarkar, President, Biocon Ltd.

Dr M K Bhan giving away the BioInstitute of the Year Award to Prof. Aparna Dattagupta, head of the Department of Animal Sciences, School of Life Sciences, University of Hyderabad. Pradeep Gupta, managing director, CyberMedia and publisher of BioSpectrum, presenting the BioSupplier Company of Year award to Sanjeev Dhar of Agilent Technologies.

Quintiles bagged the BioServices Company of the Year Award. The award was given away by E Abraham Mathew, chief editor, BioSpectrum, to Dr Ferzaan Engineer, CEO, Quintiles. The University of Hyderabad was adjudged the BioInstitute of the Year. The award was presented by Dr MK Bhan to Prof. Aparna Dattagupta, head of the Department of Animal Sciences, School of Life Sciences, University of Hyderabad. Pradeep Gupta presented the BioSupplier Company of Year award to Sanjeev Dhar of Agilent Technologies.

N Suresh, editor, BioSpectrum, gave the vote of thanks. The principal sponsor for the BioSpectrum Awards Nite was Genome Valley, Hyderabad. The State Bank of India, the Amity Institute of Biotechnology and the RK Institute of Management and Computer Science were the other sponsors. While State Bank of India sponsored the Product of the Year Award, Amity Institute of Biotechnology supported the Entrepreneur of the Year Award. RK Institute of Management and Computer Science sponsored the BioIndustrial Company of the Year.

Namratha Jagtap