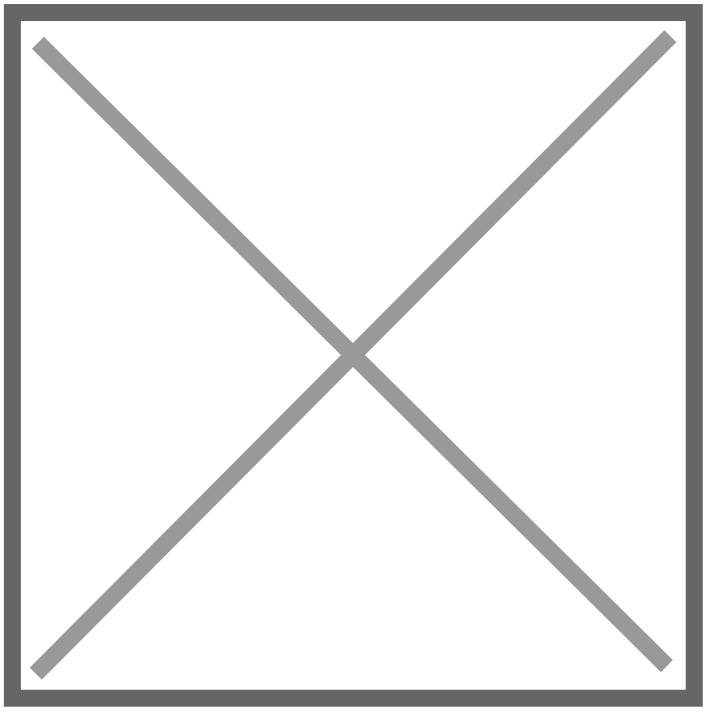
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AP's growth catalyst

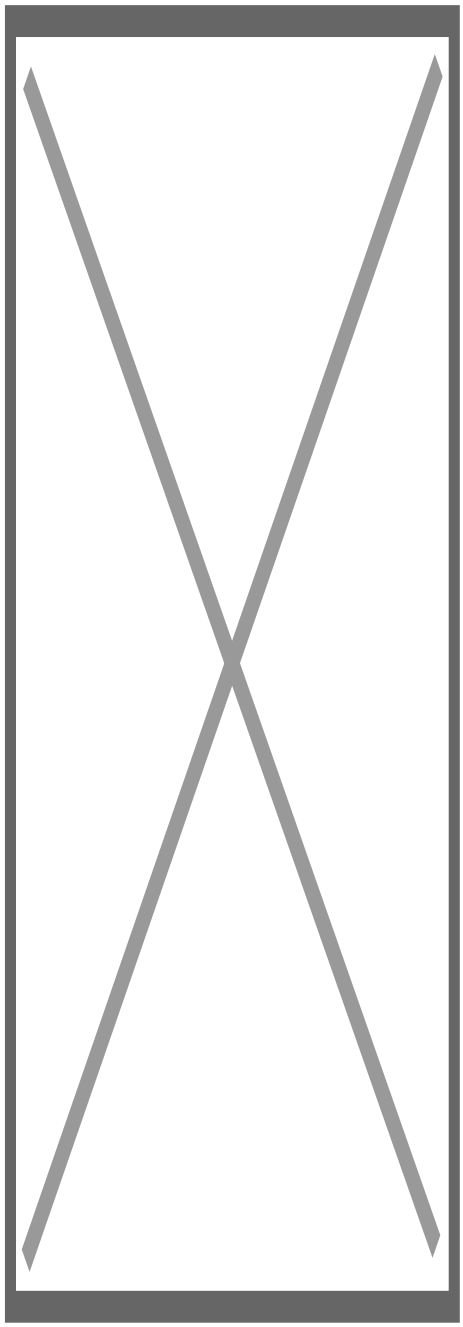
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AP's growth catalyst

The business-friendly government of Andhra Pradesh has actively pursued the cause of the biotech industry in the state. It also created India's first biotech venture fund APIDC.

The benefits of biotechnology in terms of employment generation, socio-economic development of the society are luring all state governments to make efforts to attract investments to develop proper infrastructure suitable for the emerging and niche biotechnology industry. The state governments of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh along with Andhra Pradesh were the first to announce the state biotech policies in 2001. But after announcing policies, except for Andhra Pradesh, the other states could not do much for the industry. With continued support and initiatives from the government, the biotechnology industry in Andhra Pradesh picked up gradually. Today, the state is home to over 100 biotech companies.



The Andhra Pradesh government believes that the growth of an industry depends on three building blocks or linkages namely government support, industry itself and academic R&D institutes. It prefers to act as a facilitator and catalyst. It has felt the need for a well-defined policy to forge a private-public partnership in the development of biotechnology in the state.

The state government has a think tank that has experts from different fields. Dr Manju Sharma, former secretary, DBT, Dr D Balasubramanian, head of research, LV Prasad Eye Institute, Dr MV Rao, former vice-chancellor, Andhra Pradesh Agriculture University, Dr Lalji Singh, director, CCMB, Dr Seyed Hasnain, director, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, S Dhawan, representative, Biotech Park Joint Venture Company and Utkarsh Palnitkar, consultant, Ernst & Young, who are lending a helping hand in shaping the biotech development in the state. It is this approach of Andhra Pradesh that facilitates development of the biotech business in the state.

Andhra Pradesh has the attitude of a business conglomerate. A quick analogy will show that the state government is the platform maker. The platform is the building block to build biotech industry. In fact the state has all the components that make it a quality platform. The state has a biotechnology policy, APIDC Venture Capital Ltd that has been providing venture capital to biotech start-ups. It has also an integrated IPR facilitating cell at ICICI Knowledge Park established is association with CII.

This is to cater to the growing demands of the industries in Andhra Pradesh for patent search and analysis, patentability advisory services, IPR awareness and training.

The list can stretch. The difference the state brings in business parlance is the early bird advantage. It has done all this before any other state. The state also realizes the importance of strategic alliances. For instance, it signed an agreement with Thailand to mutually promote biotech through collaboration in research and exchange of scientists and teaching professionals. This alliance would be beneficial in the area of marine biotechnology and biotech applications for aquaculture and tropical medicine. The agreement with Iowa State of USA is to leverage agribiotech and bio-medical research. Take another case. It tied up with Research Triangle Park of North Carolina. Because of this equation, companies like CiVentiChem, a contract research and drug-discovery support company, and Kard Scientific Inc. of Cambridge, USA have set shop in the Genome Valley.

Another thing the state is doing is facilitating networking. In this regard it has been organizing BioAsia, an annual international conference which started in February 2004. This will enable the industry to have a platform to understand the issues and deliberate and also showcase each other's strengths. Such conferences have proved to serve as an excellent industry-academia-global networking platform. The state is also home to the Federation of Asian Biotech Association (FABA) which was launched in the second BioAsia event held in February 2005, to promote the interests of biotechnology as a science and to foster cooperation among the Asian countries and the world of biotechnology at large.

With all these incentives and support from the government, the biotechnology sector in the state is doing well and concerted efforts are on to make Andhra Pradesh a leading name in the global biotech map.

Narayan Kulkarni