



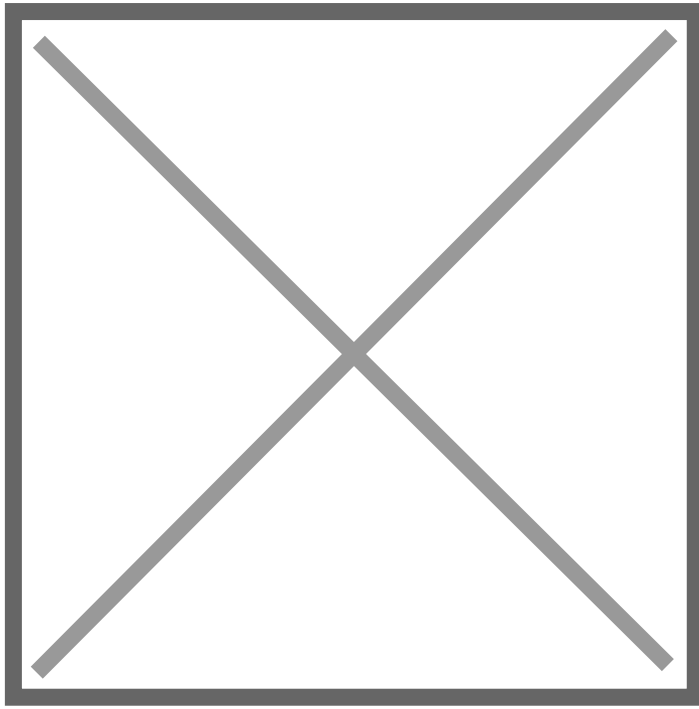
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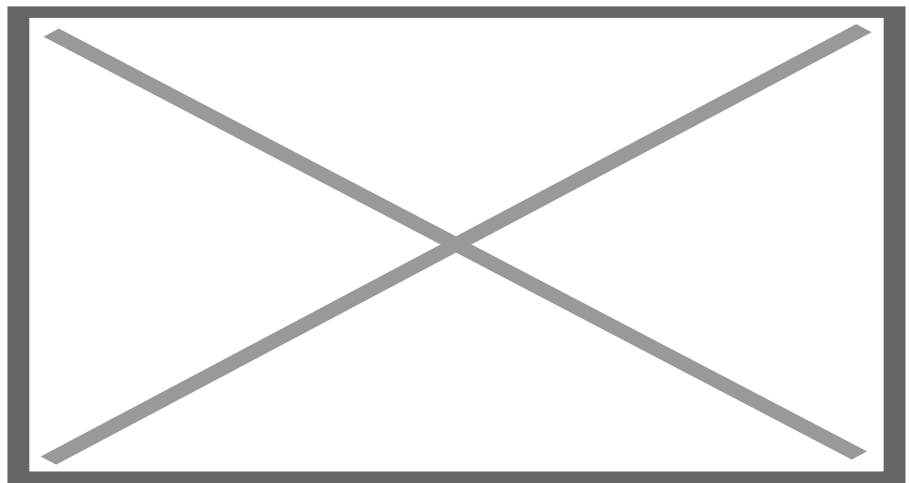
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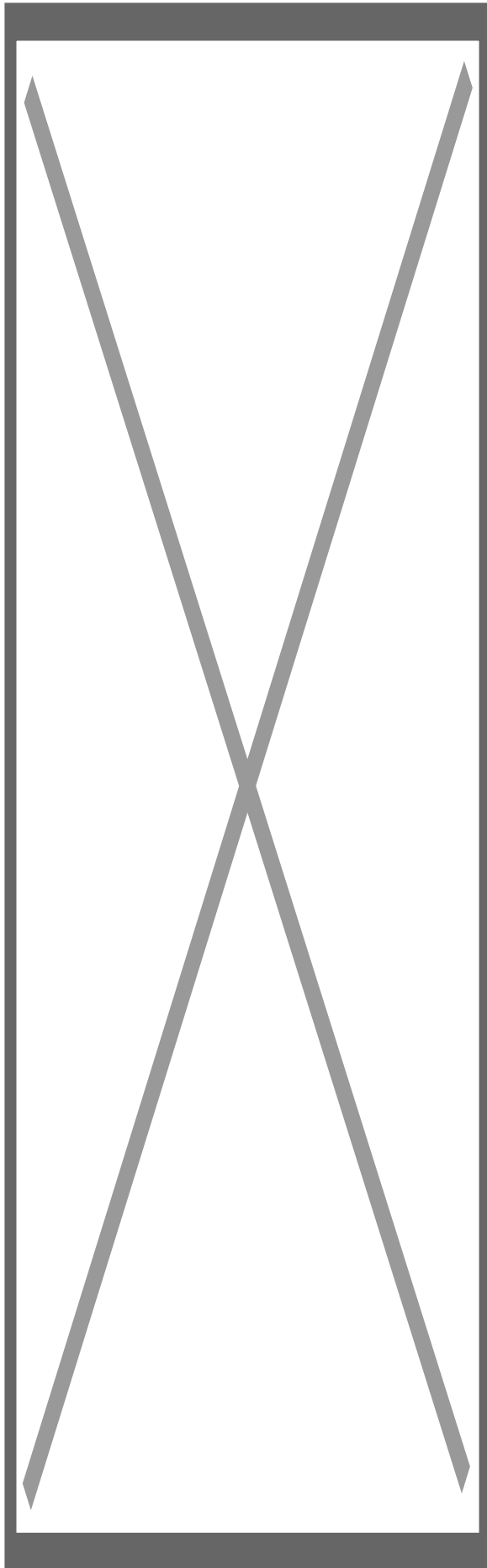
Indian biotech shines bright at BIO 2005

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Both BIO and India have truly arrived at Philadelphia in June 2005. When the fourth annual convention of the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) was held for the first time in Philadelphia in 1996, there were just 3,000 visitors including a handful of Indians.

The 13th edition which returned to the city where the US as we know was founded in the 17th century, it was different. There were over 18,000 participants and India was truly the flavor of the event.

Sheer numbers don't tell the tale. There was a contingent of 50 Indian biotech business leaders under the CII umbrella, led by S&T Minister Kapil Sibal and a fairly big Indian pavilion at the trade exhibition.

There weren't too many sessions where India was not mentioned. Almost every speaker in every session referred to the biotech developments catching up in India and China and how the US biotech sector, which still accounts for 80 percent of the global revenues, should begin to engage India.

Is the global biotech market shifting to India and China? Stelios Papadopoulos, vice chairman of SG Cowen & Co was asked specifically at a plenary session, The Mating Game - Finding and Nurturing Partners. "Not yet. But it is on the way," he replied.

"The process will quicken based on how some test cases on IPR violations are dealt with. But the real challenges are economic in nature and not regulation or policy. It will depend on the demand growth for drugs here."

The Indian flavor was evident at the inaugural session of BIO on June 19. The first session, "Scenarios for the Future of BioSciences: Global Challenges and Opportunities in the Coming Decade," opened with a strong plea by ABLE President Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw to the biotech sector to look to India for partnership to lower the drug development costs, speed up time to market and provide affordable medicines to the whole world. Her argument: The US regulator should permit at least 20 percent of the clinical trials of all new drugs to be done in India under global standards. This would dramatically lower the drug developments costs and time.

The session was followed by a global health symposium. Two of the five speakers were Indians. Mazumdar-Shaw and DBT secretary, Dr M K Bhan. The DBT chief made full use of the global forum to present India's case as the emerging global hub for vaccine. India was prepared to meet all the regulatory and other requirement to make this happen and urged the US regulators to help India upgrade its systems and infrastructure to supply essential vaccines to the world.

A 90-minute country seminar on India was overcrowded and had attendees squatting on every nook and corner and craning their necks from every angle to catch every word of a spell-binding articulation of India's case by S&T Minister Kapil Sibal. Health should be a development issue. And the neglected diseases of the world actually offer a big market even for the giant pharma companies, he said, provided the drug developments costs are reduced dramatically.

India is the best place to make this happen, he said. And it will not only benefit the poor people of the world but and the 70 million middle class American who are not able to afford key medicines now. Sibal said, "Come to India. You will be able to develop the best drugs at the lowest prices with the