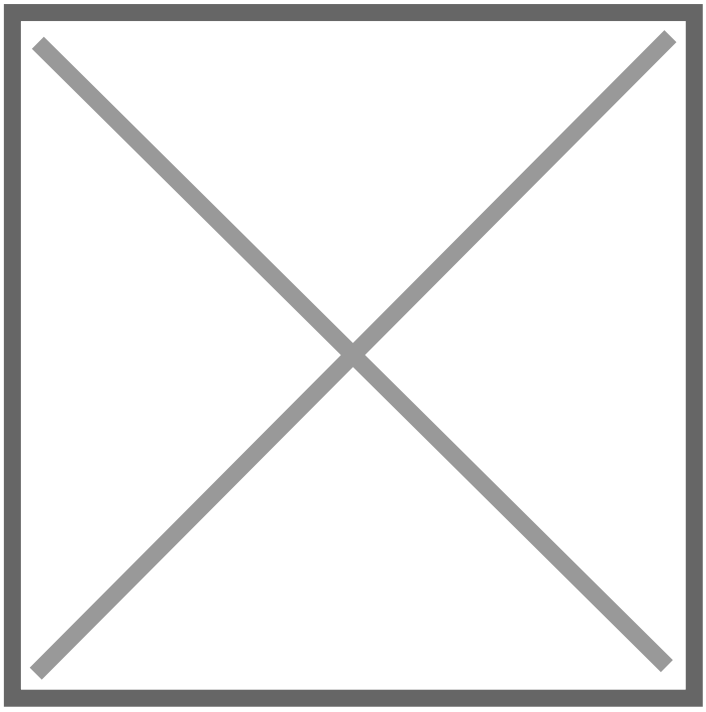
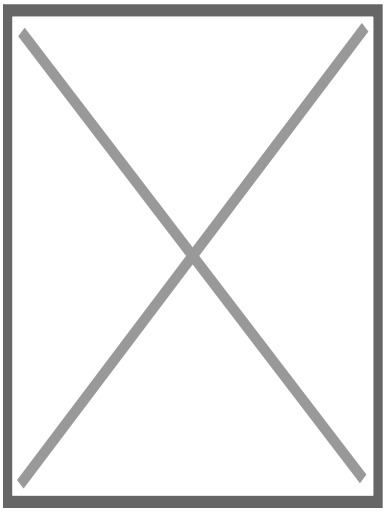


Biotech Rumblings

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By every yardstick, the Indian biotech industry is growing at a healthy phase. There is no doubt about this. To support this growing industry, many related sectors have emerged in recent years. Biotech education is one such sector which has expanded its size and scope phenomenally in the last five years.

However, the biotech education sector is developing a love-hate relationship with the fledgling biotech industry. Almost every week, I am in different corners of the country interacting with biotech educators, students and teachers. Whether it is Patiala in Punjab in the northern part of the country or at Sathyamangalam in Tamil Nadu's southwestern corner, the industry-academia debate is conducted on predicted lines. All the students want a job in biotech companies and also demand why they don't get the phenomenal salary packages their friends in information technology courses grab without any sweat.

On the other hand, industry leaders are dismayed by the quality of the talent pools that come out of the 300 plus institutions providing B.Tech and other related biotech courses. The CEO of a hotshot company lamented to me that his team had to check out over 100 candidates recently just to hire one. Most other CEOs too have similar experiences.

The nation seems to be on the verge of producing far too many biotech graduates than required at least in the short run. This is happening because every third engineering college in the country has started a B.Tech (biotech) course and these courses are approved by various agencies which are not really in touch with the movers and shakers of the biotech industry. The industry leaders themselves are struggling to establish their business braving a variety of adverse conditions, including business risk. The academic community is not fully in sync with the demands of this fledgling industry which is trying to establish itself in a very short time and hence their expectations of top class collaborations with companies is not taking place.

What is the solution? BioSpectrum has taken the lead to provide the neutral platform for different stakeholders of biotech to come together to meet and understand each other's requirements find a common way out of the mess. The dialogue has to go on at different levels and at multiple locations. Industry will surely require a lot of human resources in the near future and so we should look at the educational entrepreneurs and the students who have placed their bets on biotechnology sympathetically and help them in many ways. Otherwise, a talent crunch will slow down the growth of the industry when it is ready to take off.

Meanwhile, the nation has honored Geneticist MS Swaminathan by making him a Member of Parliament. The presence of people like Swaminathan whose tireless contributions in the public domain for the last 50 years will actually enhance the status of the upper house of Parliament (Rajya Sabha). It is indeed an honor to the biotech community that President Kalam chose to nominate Swaminathan in the special category reserved for experts like him. We are all proud of the fact that the First BioSpectrum Life Time Achievement Awardee will add yet another cap to his illustrious career to further the cause of Indian farmers and the biotechnology sector. Now only two other honors await him: a Bharat Ratna and selection as the President of India.

The 5th BioSpectrum-ABLE Survey process has started and the questionnaire would reach you all before you get this copy of the magazine. This year, the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIM-B) too has joined to the survey process to assess the impact of strategic alliances, and mergers and acquisitions on the industry. We look forward to an overwhelming response to the survey this time too.

<sureshn@cybermedia.co.in>