

## Innovators meet policy makers, talk big on industry expansion

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The second edition of the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) Innovators Meet 2013, was held at Manesar (Haryana) on September 23-24, 2013. Much visible from the theme 'Catalysing the Growth of an Innovation Driven Biotech Enterprise', the meet this time was focused on policy changes and pathways to drive the Indian Bio-economy to reach \$ 100 billion by 2025.

The distinguishing factor about the event was the keen focus given on innovators to interact, network and discuss successful case studies, challenges and opportunities for strengthening the biotech enterprise.

The meet was inaugurated by Prof. K VijayRaghavan, secretary, department of biotechnology (DBT) and chairman, BIRAC. In his address to the gathering, he talked about empowering the young innovators in various areas is one of the strategic keys to achieve the expansion of industry. "We need to work towards building a strong system of innovation," he said.

Dr Renu Swarup, managing director, BIRAC while welcoming the delegates expressed hope that the forum will help them in identifying the opportunities to collaborate and work together for laying down a road map to future. She said further, "One of the key strategies of BIRAC is fostering innovating capabilities in all places of research and with a focus on start-ups and SMEs"

In his opening remarks, Dr G Padmanabhan, NASI-chairman and former director, Indian Institute of Science, talked about the potential that stem cells and computational biology offer. He wondered whether India could ever replicate the big manufacturing units US has in the area. He mentioned further, "Fifteen manufacturing institutions set up in US. I imagine can we have such implementation in India."

Dr Padmanabhan expressed happiness on the spectrum of schemes by BIRAC and exhorted industry to take full advantage. He had a word of caution as well. He advised the BIRAC that its focus areas should be limited. "Rather than going into too much of diversification, the selection of the best be maintained. "Diverse projects don't instill confidence. You may face difficulties with utilization. Make best use of money," he advised. Speaking on regulatory landscape, he said, "There is a great

difficulty in regulations. We go from one extent to other between DCGI and other agencies. Activism is sometimes good too as it keep a tab on any wrongdoing but it has to be right spirit. For the unnecessary criticism, there has to be proper education."

The flagship BIRAC Innovators Award was awarded to five best innovations by the industry. SMEs and academia were encouraged to participate in the business idea Pitching Session and Poster Presentation. industry delegates got the opportunity to interact with Prof. K. VijayRaghavan, secretary, DBT and Dr M. K. Bhan, former secretary, DBT and discuss the policy challenges in the Indian Biotech sector. The meet concluded with the recommendations for fostering the innovation in Indian Bio-economy and creating environment conducive for the commercialization of socially relevant and responsive innovations.

More than 200 stakeholders including policy makers, Industry leaders, start-ups, entrepreneurs and academic researchers attended the meet. The two day long meet witnessed the deliberations on issues ranging from funding opportunities for Bio-entrepreneurs, fostering innovation through bio-enterprises and issues and concerns in biopharma, bioagri, bioindustrial, bioservices and bioinformatics. The amalgamation of thoughts from industry and academia highlighted the issues critical for the growth of biotechnology in India and the measures to address them.