

"We need to win back investors to India"

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Q: Shouldn't there be a much more democratic set up (opinion of scientists across institutes) to frame policy or it isn't realistic at all?

I think this is a given. All the brains in India should come together to frame policies and facilitate the growth of this sector. I am not sure this can be left to any specific group. Also these days public opinion is also important and hence informed debates is also necessary. There is a transition on the way things are done today. People's involvement is critical and supreme.

Q: What are your expectations from the next government slated to be formed in June 2013? What should be its priorities for bioscience industry?

I expect the new government to spend about 4-5 billion per annum on strengthening the infrastructure in regulation, enforceability of quality controls, IP and also other infrastructure requirements that are currently not in place. There has to be a separate channel at the customs for import of all materials related to R&D or atleast a separate cell which can fast track

such processes. In addition it would be useful to have a five year policy for S&T and not do knee jerk on policies. Every single approval needs a clear path of progression with a time line. We need to win back investors back to India.

Q: Have the political parties ignored the bioscience industry in their manifesto? What could be the reasons and how they can be made aware about its importance?

I think people understand health. There is always something in their manifesto. But lot do not understand research that goes into this sector. So I would say that this is more ignorance than indifference.

Just to add, I think we need to form several regional think tanks in science and technology, independent of institutional bias. This should comprise of individuals from industry, academics and social groups. The stake holders need to have a larger say in their requirements. We should also co opt the best brains from outside the country to bring in fresh international thinking. This body should be able to recommend to the planning commission and the concerned ministries. We have to be sure that this does not become one more body among the many.