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11 November 2005 | News



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Anil Paul Kariath, managing director, Sartorius India Pvt Ltd has quit the company to start a new venture. Kariath is launching BioZEEN (a division of Bangalore Biotech Labs Pvt Ltd), a specialized institution to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

"At BioZEEN a cGMP compliant biopharmaceutical plant has been set up to impart training in an industry environment. BioZEEN is equipped with all process equipment used in the biopharma industry. The students will be provided hands-on training in animal cell culture, media production, microbial fermentation, downstream processing, etc. Students with engineering backgrounds will be trained in designing of bioreactors, process vessels and tangential flow filtration systems. In addition, they will be trained in automation and plant utility engineering. Training in validation of process plants is a part of the curriculum too," informed Kariath.

The training courses have been designed in a modular fashion of one month. "A year's training course here will be equivalent to five years of industry exposure. Industry personnel can also join for any module in which they intend to specialize at any time," he added. This course is understood to be the first of its kind in the private sector and the center has been set up with an investment of about \$3 million on a 10-acre campus in Bangalore. The courses will begin in the first quarter of 2006.

A bioprocess specialist in designing vaccine plants, biopharma plant engineering, equipment design, and validation, he built Sartorius India as a leading bioengineering company in the country. Kariath moved to Sartorius India in 1997 after a successful career in vaccine production at Indian Immunologicals Ltd.

Kumud Sampath joins US Pharmacopeia

Kumud Sampath has joined US Pharmacopeia (USP) as general manager of its India site in Hyderabad. Sampath will be leading and managing USP's subsidiary in India. Her priorities would be to establish and build strong relationships with customers, government officials, professional and trade associations, and promote the Indian site and USP's overall global public health goals.

Sampath was previously president and executive director of AstraZeneca India (Pvt) Ltd. Prior to that she was vice president of business development and operations for Astra Biochemicals Pvt Ltd. She has also been the chair of the South Zonal Export Promotion Council, a member of the Biotechnology Vision Group (Karnataka), and a member of the governing board of the Karnataka Biotechnology Development Council.

Sampath earned her master's in business administration from the University of Delhi and participated in the International Management Development program in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Legion of Honour for Prof. Goverdhan Mehta

The Government of France has conferred "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur" (Knight of the Legion of Honour) on Prof. Goverdhan Mehta, former director, IISc and presently an honorary professor at the institute.

Prof. Mehta's association with France which began in 1991 as a visiting professor in Grenoble, spans over a decade during which Indo-French scientific collaboration reached a new high. During his tenure as director of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), the Indo-French Cyber-University (FICUS) based on high-tech satellite technology, was set up between IISc and Toulouse while several projects in Prof. Mehta's area of specialization-organic synthesis and solid state chemistry were initiated. On a global scale, Prof. Mehta's contribution towards promotion of science in third world countries as a member of 'Third World Academy of Science' is noteworthy.

Recipient of several awards such as the Padma Shri in 2001, the CV Raman Medal in 2003, the GD Birla and Pandit Nehru National Award for Excellence in Science in 1992 and 1994 respectively, an editorial board member of nine scientific journals and a Doctor Honoris causa of several prestigious French universities, Dr Mehta started his brilliant career as a professor at the Hyderabad University, became director of the IISc, Bangalore and later was appointed CSIR Bhatnagar fellow by the Government of India.

Prof Padmanaban receives GM Modi award

The Gujar Mal Modi Science Foundation has awarded Prof. G Padmanaban, eminent biotechnologist, the prestigious "Gujar Mal Modi Award for Innovative Science & Technology" for the year 2005. Prof Padmanaban, former director and now a distinguished biotechnologist at the IISc, Bangalore, is acclaimed for his work in the area of recombinant DNA technology and malaria research.

His contribution in research related to generation of modern vaccine initiatives against different infectious diseases is well recognized in India and the rest of the world. Dr Padmanaban is presently working on new drugs for malaria, which are expected to be an economical alternative to combat this poor man's disease.

"India becoming a hub of vaccinology"

â€“Prof G Padmanaban speaks about malarial research and his vision for India.

What are the latest developments in malarial research?

In malaria research two significant things are happening in our laboratory. One is that we are looking at the heme pathway, which is vital for the parasite survival. We have cloned all the genes in the pathway. And if some strategic steps of the pathway are knocked out, the parasite should die.

Secondly, we have found that a combination with curcumin is completely protective against malaria in animals. We have tested our curcumin combination on a mouse model. We are now talking to the DBT and ICMR for doing clinical trials studies in humans. The challenge is definitely to develop a new drug.

What is your vision for India in the area of vaccines?

India should definitely become a hub of vaccinology, and I can see signs of that happening already. We should concentrate on vaccines and biopharmaceuticals. At this juncture, there are three diseases for which India alone does not have the competency to develop vaccines. These diseases are malaria, tuberculosis and HIV. There has to be an international effort to develop vaccines against these diseases, and India should be a significant part of this effort.

Rolly Dureha